

NOV -4 1958

B 739890

THE LIBRARY OF  
CONGRESS  
SERIAL RECORD  
NOV 10 1958  
Copy

# The

# Literary

# Review

**Robert Hillyer**

**Waldo Frank**

**Padraic Colum**

**QUARTERLY / ONE DOLLAR / SUMMER 1958**

## Editorial Notes

Flattering comment has come to the *Review* for its features of significant contemporary writers. Past numbers of the *Review* have saluted the writer-physicians William Carlos Williams, Oliver St. John Gogarty, and Merrill Moore. This number pays respect to Robert Hillyer, one of America's most accomplished writers; Padraic Colum, whose star in the Irish Literary Renaissance still shines brightly today; and Waldo Frank, an American writer and thinker who has gone his own way down the years, wielding an influence of large proportions, not only upon our own culture, but on cultures the world over. Features devoted to other important modern writers are in preparation.

We regret to report that copies of Volume 1, Number 1, of *The Literary Review* are no longer available. Persons who do not wish to keep their copies of this first Number are urged to contribute them to our reserve files. We are especially eager to have them in order to supply libraries with complete sets for binding purposes.

*The Literary Review* has been selected from a list of leading American periodicals for exhibition at the World's Fair (American Pavilion), Brussels, Belgium, throughout the Summer. Copies of the Spring and this Summer Number are also available for purchase at the Fair.

In the Spring *Review* we discussed the dearth of plays, long poems, and *penseés* appearing in magazines. There is another literary art form of honorable history that at the moment is in the shade in this country as well as in other countries. We

refer to the *novella*, a tale of a length between a short story and a novel. Some of the most enduring works in literature have appeared as *novellas*. One of the greatest Russian classics, *The Gentleman From San Francisco*, by Ivan Bunin, is a *novella*. If it were longer it would be prolix, if it were shorter it would be too reticent. In France, to mention only one example that comes to mind, there is *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, by Gustav Flaubert. The Germans have given us a host of *novellas*, of which perhaps the best known modern one is Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Henry James' *Daisy Miller* and *The Turn of the Screw* and *Washington Square*, all *novellas*, are among that minor master's major works. In the United States there are many superb *novellas*. Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* and *My Mortal Enemy* belong to this group; and, of course, Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, which is little more than a long short story, is near the top of American *novellas*.

The *novella* is a medium that has always had a special appeal to meticulous writers. It seems to be the right way to say something lovely about a monumental moment in life. It calls for economy of expression and thus releases the innermost powers of suggestion on the part of the artist. It contains a discipline that truly liberates, and it forbids the writer from saying more than he really feels. It is the sonnet form of fiction.

*The Literary Review* would be pleased to present *novellas* of quality that may be in hiding in the trunks of writers in this country and in *partibus infidelium*. Those in foreign tongues will, of course, (continue inside back cover)

## Contributors

WILLIAM BITTNER is author of the recently published *The Novels of Waldo Frank* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958). His articles and reviews have appeared in a wide variety of publications. In addition to his work as literary critic, Dr. Bittner is Assistant Professor of English at Fairleigh Dickinson University and lectures on literature at the New School for Social Research, New York City. He is at present working on a biography of Edgar Allan Poe.

FRED COGSWELL, Associate Professor of English at the University of New Brunswick, Canada, is the author of two books of poetry—*The Stunted Strong* (1954) and *The Haloed Tree* (1955)—and of a translation of *The Testament of Cresseid* (1957). His poems have appeared in various British, American, and Canadian periodicals including *The New Statesman and Nation*, *New World Writing* and *Queen's Quarterly*. He is the Editor of *Fiddlehead*, a quarterly magazine of verse.

PADRAIC COLUM. See Levy article.

CHARLES EDWARD EATON is the author of three volumes of poetry: *The Bright Plain* (1942), *The Shadow of the Swimmer* (1951), and *The Greenhouse in the Garden* (1956). His poetry and short stories have appeared in over forty leading magazines. Mr. Eaton lives in Connecticut, where he devotes all of his time to writing. At the moment, he is working on a fourth volume of

# The Literary Review

### Editors

Clarence R. Decker  
Charles Angoff

### Advisory Editors

Peter Sammartino  
Loyd Haberly  
Edith Heal

### Secretary

Ruth Waldmann

Published Quarterly by  
FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON  
UNIVERSITY  
at Teaneck, New Jersey

Subscriptions \$4.00 a year domestic, foreign \$4.50. U.S. distributor: B. DeBoer, 102 Beverly Road, Bloomfield, New Jersey. Copyright © 1958 by Fairleigh Dickinson University. Published at 212 Xenia Avenue, Yellow Springs, Ohio. Second class mail privileges authorized at Yellow Springs, Ohio, and Teaneck, New Jersey. Unsolicited manuscripts if unaccepted will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope. Printed and bound by The Antioch Press, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

DEB8857 8

poetry and on a novel with a Brazilian background (he served as Vice Consul at the American Embassy in Rio de Janeiro 1942-1946).

**WALDO FRANK.** See Willingham and Bittner articles.

**ROBERT HILLYER**, celebrating his fortieth year as a writer, tells his own absorbing story in the delightful reminiscences he has written especially for the *Review* and in a representative group of letters, written over the years, which he has selected for publication at this time.

**WILLIAM TURNER LEVY**, a friend of Padraic Colum for nearly twenty years, teaches English at The City College of New York. An Episcopal clergyman, he is also a member of the Clergy Group at All Angel's Church, New York. He conducts a monthly column, "Not Far Afield," in *The Churchman*. His first book, *William Barnes: The Man and the Poems*, will be published in England this year.

**WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT** is the author of eight volumes of poetry, several of which have won national awards. Among his more recent books are *To Marry Strangers* (1945), *Mr. Whittier and Other Poems* (1948), and *The Dark Sister* (1957). The last was recently reviewed most favorably in the *New York Times* by Mr. Hillyer. Mr. Scott was a

member of the staff of the *Providence Journal* from 1931-1951, serving as Literary Editor from 1941-1951. He now lives in New Mexico, where he devotes full time to writing.

**WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS** has practiced Medicine and written most of his thirty-eight published volumes of poetry, fiction, plays, sketches, criticism, and autobiography in Rutherford, New Jersey, where he has lived since 1912. In addition to his many distinguished services—as a major influence in contemporary writing, as a generous friend to promising young writers—Dr. Williams gave strong moral support to the launching last year of *The Literary Review*. Rutherford is the home, not only of Dr. Williams, but also of the first of Fairleigh Dickinson University's three campuses (the other two campuses are at Teaneck and Madison-Florham Park, New Jersey). Concerning his story in this number of the *Review*, Dr. Williams writes: "The manuscript has never left my family."

**JOHN R. WILLINGHAM**, professor of English at Centenary College of Louisiana, specializes in American Literature. His particular interest is Walt Whitman and the writers who have forwarded the Whitman tradition. He has published articles and reviews in *American Literature*, *The Explicator*, *Books Abroad*, and *Library Journal*.

# THE LITERARY REVIEW

*AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY WRITING*

VOLUME I

SUMMER, 1958

NUMBER 4

The Masquerade, <i>a poem</i>	Robert Hillyer	388
Forty Years of Writing	Robert Hillyer	389
A Filler, <i>a poem</i>	Robert Hillyer	406
Robert Hillyer as Correspondent, <i>letters</i>	Robert Hillyer	407
Poems:	Robert Hillyer	425
A Ballade of Revelation 425; The Descendant 426; The Person from Porlock 427; The Garden 428; The Interpreter 429; The Pavilion by the Sea 430.		
Robert Hillyer:	Winfield Townley Scott	431
A Poet's First Forty Years		
From Gargantua to the Yahoo	Waldo Frank	441
Seeds for the Next Spring	Waldo Frank	456
The Achievement of Waldo Frank	John R. Willingham	465
Free to Destroy—Free to Create	Waldo Frank	477
Waldo Frank as Novelist	William Bittner	478
Mood-Piece, <i>a poem</i>	Fred Cogswell	484
Joseph, or The Search for the Brother, <i>a story</i>	Padraic Colum	485
Calen O Costure Me, <i>a poem</i>	Padraic Colum	491
Padraic Colum, Poet	William Turner Levy	493
The Insane, <i>a story</i>	William Carlos Williams	505
Sonnet to Adventure, <i>a poem</i>	Charles Edward Eaton	508
Index to Volume I		509

## The Masquerade

ROBERT HILLYER

What frizzled and bedizened dames are these  
Who limp around the ballroom in the arms  
Of creaking gaffers, old nonentities,  
Fit partners for such sere and raddled charms?  
Bad taste has gone too far. This morbid joke  
Offends me as I note that all these creatures  
Are my close friends disguised as ancient folk,  
With powdered hair, or none, and made-up features.  
I thought this party was a benefit  
To aid a hospital and not a morgue.  
Some symbolist, perhaps, might fancy it,  
Poe, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, or Jules Laforgue.  
What trick of light on looking glass replies  
That I have donned a similar disguise?

# Forty Years of Writing

ROBERT HILLYER

THE DISTINGUISHED EDITORS of *The Literary Review* have invited me to set down a few reminiscences—a dangerous invitation to one of my age. The present is only the visible part of the iceberg; the larger accumulation lies beneath the surface of time. It is best, however, not to be weighted down by the past but to float on it. So I shall try to do, lightly and at random.

It is forty years between the publication of my first book, *Sonnets and Other Lyrics* (Harvard, 1917) and my most recent book, *The Relic and Other Poems* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1957). I was twenty-two and am now sixty-two.

The first world war was going on when *Sonnets and Other Lyrics* appeared. I was in France at the time, and in my absence I had a most notable trio of editors to see the book through the press: Dean L. B. R. Briggs of Harvard, Odell Shepard, poet and subsequently lieutenant governor of Connecticut, and William Allan Neilson, president of Smith College. It was a beautiful little volume, designed by Dwiggins, and the first book of original poetry published by the Harvard University Press.

Shortly after the copies reached me in France, I was stationed in Tours. Nearby, on an island in the Loire, lived Anatole France, whose works were the delight of my generation. The lady who gave me a letter of introduction to him warned me to observe three amenities: always to call him Maître, to present a book of his to be inscribed, and to bring him a gift. For his inscription I wanted a copy of *La Revolte des Anges*, but the only one of his books that I could find in the shops of Tours was *Thaïs*. As for the gift, what could be more appropriate than a copy of my new *Sonnets and Other Lyrics*? Accompanied by two friends and armed with the two volumes, I rang the bell in the stone wall that surrounded the Master's property. A gaunt serving woman opened the gate in the wall. "What present have you brought for the Master?" she asked.

I produced my copy of *Sonnets and Other Lyrics*.

We were then admitted. Anatole France was benign, cordial, and amusing. We had a long visit with him, two hours or more. Smiling, he patted my book. "I am delighted to have this," he said. "It is a beautiful format. The print is excellent and I feel sure the poems are, too. For my part, I do not know one word of English." At the end of the visit, however, he wrote in my copy of *Thaïs*, "Au poète lyrique, au jeune sage, au penseur libre et charmant, Robert Hillyer, souvenir d'Anatole France." This enthusiastic comment on my qualities as poet was pronounced by a man who could not read a word that I had written.

Those who could reviewed it with mingled praise and blame. On the whole, it received much better notices than it would today. Both poets and critics were far more innocent then; also, there were fewer poets and many more readers of poetry. If I were asked my objective opinion of the book (and one can be entirely objective after forty years) it would not be favorable; there are not many of these poems that have been reprinted in later collections. But the other day I read it through, and although I thought it hopelessly out of date, I found something there—perhaps a confidence in emotion—that later years have gradually rubbed away.

It is natural that the book should have been derivative. I passed my childhood in a household where good literature and music were taken for granted as part of the normal sequence of everyday life. At fourteen I was sent away to boarding school at Kent, in the western part of Connecticut, where the steep dark hills and mysterious waters of the Housatonic valley fixed in my memory with the firm persuasion of romantic landscape hundreds of ancient poems whose cadences to this day bring back something of the bitter-sweet sting of adolescence. Later, at Harvard, I was part of a small group—John Dos Passos, S. Foster Damon, E. E. Cummings, Robert Nathan, John Brooks Wheelwright, Malcolm Cowley—always in search of something exciting in books new or old. The second-hand bookshops in Boston enthralled me, and I purchased so wisely that when I recently thinned out my library by some two thousand dispensable books, the acquisitions of my college days remained intact. When all is said and done, the poets who

have lasted me best are Horace and Virgil, the Elizabethans, Pope, and, among recent poets, Robert Bridges.

In 1920, when I was on a fellowship at the University of Copenhagen, Bridges was under attack in Parliament because, as Poet Laureate, he had invited to Oxford certain professors from Germany—or merely suggested that they be invited: I forget which. The wounds of the first war were still raw, and it was considered an outrageous thing to do. I wrote him a letter, accompanied by a somewhat florid poem, in praise of his stand. I have his reply before me. He passed over the attack with casual humor and remarked that what interested him most was the impending election of women to Parliament. "My danger is," he concluded, "lest I should be distracted from the serious nature of the controversy by enjoyment of its sporting side & by the full appreciation of those comicalities with which Providence so ingeniously lightens our sorrows." Six years later when I passed an evening with him in his house on Boar's Hill near Oxford I considered asking him if he remembered the episode and my letter; then, recalling the highly emotional character of the poem I had sent him, I blushed and was silent. It was W. B. Yeats who had given me my first copy of Bridges' *Shorter Poems* back in 1914.

I met Yeats through Mrs. Simeon Ford, a tall, bony old lady with buck teeth, and an indefatigable hostess to celebrities in the New York of the period. It was she, too, who introduced me to Witter Bynner, now my friend of long standing but infrequent correspondence. Even as far back as that Bynner stood high in poetry. Of Yeats I remember little to relate except that he was perturbed that I possessed no copy of the *Shorter Poems*. He purchased one at Scribner's Bookshop and left it there in the custody of Lewis Hatch. Hatch was a scholarly gentleman of fine taste, a type seldom to be found in the bookshops of today. I have a copy of Housman's *Shropshire Lad* that he gave me when Housman was new in America, and his calling card is still in it with a brief message: "I know you'll love this." It was he, too, who gave me Francis Ledwidge's *Songs of the Fields*, so beautiful in spots and

so forgotten. I was a little disappointed, being nineteen, that Yeats had not written anything in the Bridges book, and Hatch pointed out that he would not have felt free to do so, since he was not the author. But except for close friends, English and Irish authors do not inscribe books so readily as do Americans. At the British Museum I once asked Arthur Waley to inscribe a copy of his Chinese translations. He looked puzzled, and said in all seriousness, "But that will make it second-hand, won't it?"

A major poet whose friendship I cherish to this day is Robert Frost, whom I first met in 1915. The memory of our early acquaintance is shadowed by an embarrassing episode. He was on a walking tour through Connecticut, putting up here and there where he had friends. I gave him a letter to Father Sill, the headmaster of my old school. Father Sill had many virtues, most of which have adequately been sung, but of modern poetry he knew nothing. The Latin poets, yes—but I should have known that Robert Frost, whose fame was then not so widespread as it is today, would be unknown to him. At any rate, Robert Frost, arriving at Kent in his walking clothes, was regarded suspiciously as though he were a tramp with sinister designs, until Horace Schiedt, who, be it noted, was a teacher of chemistry, intervened and tried to make up for the inauspicious reception. Frost has never forgotten this contretemps—nor have I.

As far as I know, Frost never influenced my work. One or two critics have professed to discern an influence, but merely because, as I see it, I have lived most of my life in the New England countryside and many of my poems deal with it. That Frost's attitude toward poetry influenced me, I have no doubt; in fact, I should hope that it had. But since circumstance has for thirty-eight years committed me to a full academic schedule, and I have succumbed perhaps more than I should to social life, I have not been able to apply myself as single-heartedly to poetry as might be wished. Frost's aloofness to neglect in his early years, however, serves as a model of immunity to opinion. "Never mind," he said once when I had been relating some literary disappointment, "your books are on the shelf and sooner or later someone will take them down and

read them." At another time he wrote, "I'm sure from the book you gave me that you are on the right road for you. Now go the whole length of it. And I'll be watching." After his visit to us here in Delaware, my wife modeled in clay a superb head of Robert Frost, which makes him our constant guest.

While I was at the University of Copenhagen I applied myself, in collaboration with Foster Damon, who won a fellowship the same year, to the translation of Danish lyric poets of the last century and a half. At that time, this English version was the only anthology of Danish poetry in any language. We retained the exact meters and rhyme-schemes of our originals. The book was published in 1922 by the American-Scandinavian Foundation and won the approval of the Danes themselves, an acid test.

That year Damon had another project; he was at work on his great book on Blake, which, with further publications on the subject, was subsequently to make him the acknowledged authority on the poet. For my part, I was deep in the study of the religion of the ancient Egyptians and the so-called *Book of the Dead*. Using the literal translation of E. A. Wallis Budge, of the British Museum, I made metrical versions of the hymns in *The Book of the Dead* and wrote a substantial essay on the Egyptian religion. All this was published serially in the old *Freeman*. I wanted to make a book of it, but no publisher seemed interested. Then the tomb of King Tut-ankh-Amen was discovered, and everybody became excited about ancient Egypt. William Stanley Braithwaite had at that time just started a publishing house in Boston, the B. J. Brimmer Company. In 1923 he brought out my book, which I called *The Coming Forth by Day* (the correct title of the ancient books). Of all the books that poured from the presses in response to the furor about Tut-ankh-Amon, mine, I believe, was the only one that failed to sell. Furthermore, the Brimmer Company shortly went bankrupt, and I took my royalties in the form of the several hundred remaining copies of the book. These I stored in my country house in Pomfret, Connecticut. Ten years later, the house burned to the ground, carrying with it the entire collection. It was almost enough to make one believe in the famous curse of Tut-ankh-Amen—except that

the book had nothing to do with him. A few copies survive. I have only two myself.

In 1922, as part of a series of literary articles in *The Freeman*, I published an essay on Emily Dickinson. It began with the statement that the poet was almost unknown. It was true at that time, and it is some satisfaction to remember that this essay was an important factor in her rediscovery. Everybody interested in literature read *The Freeman*. At about the same time I mentioned to Herbert Jenkins of Little, Brown and Company, publishers of Emily Dickinson, that I thought he ought to renew the copyright on her poems. O no, he said, there was no call for those books any more. So I suppose the copyright lapsed. Just recently I heard from Dr. Thomas H. Johnson that it was this article in *The Freeman* that first aroused his interest in Emily Dickinson. I am glad to have set off so splendid an illumination of the poet as his definitive editions of the poems and letters.

In the twenties I published seven books of poems, two with Brimmer, two with Brentano, one in England, and two with Viking. Among these books *The Seventh Hill* (Viking, 1928) was the most successful and began the series on which I can look back without regret or wish to delete. In 1925 I published in England a little book that has never appeared in America, although I have reprinted pieces from it. It was called *The Halt in the Garden* (Elkin Mathews). It had a brief introduction by the Welsh mystic, Arthur Machen, whom at that time I had not met, although we had corresponded for a year or two. The next year I went to see him in London and spent a few weeks near him and his family in Penally, a small village on the seacoast of South Wales. It was a haunted countryside, with prehistoric earthworks and Roman remains nearby, and, a few miles away, the ruins of the castle of Manorbier, the birthplace of Giraldus Cambrensis, who called it the fairest spot in Wales. The place had a strange effect on me. I had the feeling, not indefinite, but sharp and accompanied by visual images, that I had been there long before. The next winter, back in my house in Hartford, I was seized one dark afternoon with the desire to write

about the castle of Manorbier. I started writing and continued until dinner was announced. As I left the poem, I did so with the assured feeling that I could go on with it without break in the mood. After dinner, I sat up till well past midnight and finished the poem. It is one of the few "possessed" pieces I have written, and, I think, one of the most successful. It is a fairly long poem, about seven pages. It appeared in *The Dial* (after a warm letter of commendation from Marianne Moore, who was then editing *The Dial*) and in my collected edition of 1933, and I have revived it in my most recent book, *The Relic and Other Poems*. As for Arthur Machen, mystic though he was, he was a most solid, Johnsonian character, with red, chuckling face and a taste for gin. I have written about him elsewhere in an essay published originally in *The Atlantic Monthly* and reprinted as a foreword in Machen's *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural*, edited by Philip Van Doren Stern (Knopf).

The English critic, J. Middleton Murry, had long been a friend to my work. He wrote a searching and exceedingly favorable review of *The Halt in the Garden* and printed my *Prothalamion* in his magazine in London, *The New Adelphi*. When he started the magazine, he asked me if I would be willing to take over the reviewing of poetry. It interested me to become critic for an English periodical, and I accepted. During 1927 and 1928 I submitted my articles quarterly. Murry was enthusiastic, and wrote me a most gracious note in which he said that he was proud of himself for having taken me on as critic. "Believe me, no finer criticism of poetry is being written in England than yours: and none that I know so fine. But, alas, it takes the reading public about 10 years to realize these things." One would think that with such encouragement I would have continued indefinitely. But I had just returned to Harvard to teach, life seemed too full, and I gave up the post. It is a weakness of mine to become bored with a routine literary job. Some years ago I contributed a series of reminiscent fragments called "Farrago" to *The Atlantic*, but after the fourth number I lost interest. Among my daydreams of affluence has been a vision of myself as a syndicated literary columnist. Providence, as wise as it is stern, has denied me the income of such a position and saved

me from an ignominious defeat. I can imagine myself after about the first week seated at my desk with the frustration of the writer who can not write. Single commissions I like, such as the light poems featured on seasonal editions of *The New York Times Book Review* or the six Phi Beta Kappa poems I have presented at various universities, but a long series gradually freezes my pen.

That is why I look back on my long sustained pieces of prose with amazement that I ever accomplished them. The first, *The Happy Episode*, a fantasy, appeared in *The American Caravan* of 1927. With the publication of my first novel, *Riverhead*, twenty-five years ago, I began my association with my present publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, who has proved to be a loyal and considerate friend to me and my work. *Riverhead* sold well; it was, indeed, a mild best seller and went through five printings. William Maxwell wrote a beautiful article about it in the *New York Herald Tribune Books*. We became fast friends later, and still are, though time and distance build opaque walls between friends. It is a pity that his own beautiful novels seem lost to the public consciousness. Among other favorable comments on *Riverhead*, the conclusion of W. T. Scott's review is still pleasant to read: "It has penetration, humanity, a sense of values, and a substructure of opinions and ideas which guarantee the book an underlying seriousness of wisdom and argument."

*Riverhead* is a book I am still proud of, but novels, except for a very few, come and go and leave no trace. To depart from chronology for a moment, my second novel was *My Heart for Hostage*, which appeared in 1942. I took my title from Michael Drayton's 61st Sonnet. Drayton is a poet I have always loved; his sonnet sequence seems to me second only to Shakespeare's. In *The Freeman* series, which I have already mentioned, I included an article on these sonnets, but no revival followed, as in the case of Emily Dickinson. Mr. Knopf did not like *My Heart for Hostage*. He said that he would publish it, but without approval. For this book, therefore, I deviated from my usual imprint. It was published by Random House and in England by Chapman and Hall. This book had a fair success, but not to the extent of *Riverhead*. Mark Schorer gave

it a splendid page-long review in *The New York Times Book Review* and it had a favorable reception in England. Furthermore, it took me to Hollywood. There was a good chance of its being adapted for the movies, and my friend Gene Fowler suggested that I come to the coast. Gene is the wittiest and wisest of friends, and he was in fine spirits over the recent success of his *Goodnight Sweet Prince*. I spent a fortnight with him and his family in Brentwood, then moved to a small cottage on the shore of the Pacific at Malibu. With the whole length of California to build in, people would, one would think, have some space around their houses. But not at Malibu. There was just space enough to squeeze through between the houses. The war was going on, and Gene could not visit me often, owing to the rationing of gasoline; the buses and trains were too crowded with troops to make travel feasible; it was winter and Malibu was almost deserted. I think it was the most desolate four months I have ever lived through. Across the road was a restaurant where I took my meals; in front of me was the Pacific Ocean, far too cold for bathing, and, at any rate in that district, a dirty brown color and studded with bloated dead seals. The only things not wholly lugubrious were huge geraniums, things seemingly made out of red plush, that I kicked in sheer exasperation. And *My Heart for Hostage* was, in the end, not taken for the movies.

My stay in Hollywood was made memorable by one small event. At the house of Diana Heineman (now Diana Cohen) I had a reunion with a lady whom I had thought long dead—my hostess of thirty years before, Mrs. Simeon Ford, now an old, old woman. She invited me for luncheon the next day. When I arrived at her little palace, the door was opened by a maid almost as old as her mistress. She looked at me, she paused, she looked again and her face took on a shock of recognition from days long ago. "Why, Mr. Hillyer!" she said. I am very poor at remembering names, but Heaven permitted me an unpremeditated flash of recollection. "Why, Margaret!" I answered, and we smiled as people do who had never thought to see each other again.

The second book of mine that Mr. Knopf published was my *Collected Verse*. That, too, went through five printings and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1934. Even after twenty-three years the excite-

ment of that time comes back, the banquet in New York, the gathering of other prize winners past and present, and some pearl evening studs given me by a cousin, which are the only tangible vestiges of the occasion, except for the handsome certificate. Years later, walking one Sunday morning through the woods of Pomfret, I met an old gentleman whom I recognized as Governor Wilbur Cross of Connecticut. "I am Robert Hillyer," I said. "Do you remember me?" "Remember you," he shouted, "who do you think was on the committee that gave you the Pulitzer Prize in 1934?" In my day, the prize was a thousand dollars; I understand that it has now been reduced to five hundred. There are many larger prizes in poetry, but the Pulitzer still stands highest in prestige; it gives a certain rank to a poet because nearly everyone has heard of it, and some, as I can state from experience, confuse it with the Nobel Prize.

In passing, I must pay tribute to one book of mine that has outsold everything else I have done. Every quarter it faithfully deposits a cheque on my doorstep just when I think I'll have to borrow at the bank. In the late 1920s, I contributed a series of essays on versification and more general poetic subjects to *The Writer*. About twenty years ago, at the suggestion of Mildred Boie, a student of mine, I gathered these together, revised and amplified them, and published them with The Writer Company under the title *First Principles of Verse*. As though endowed with perpetual motion, this little book moves on, and still, in a revised edition, continues to bestow on me the quarterly gains. I forget all about it, and then comes a cheque. It is an excellent little book; I write of it with affection and gratitude. My wife tells me that it was Gogarty's extravagant praise of this book that first fired her fancy for its author.

The 1930s were a fortunate decade. In 1931 I was elected a Fellow of The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a noble society with a long history going back to 1780. Robert Frost, also elected in 1931, and I were the only two poets in the Academy. Today there are six, including M. A. De Wolfe Howe, who was elected to the Academy in 1912 for his distinguished prose, but two

years ago, at the age of ninety-one, began his literary career all over again with a book of unusually fine poems called *Sundown*. Seven years after my election to the Academy, I was made a member of The National Institute of Arts and Letters. Two of my chief sponsors were Booth Tarkington and Charles Dana Gibson, and I have always been proud that these great gentlemen were behind me. I never met Tarkington, but we exchanged long letters. I cherish his to this day, and they are well worth reading. Charles Dana Gibson and his family spent their summers on their own island off the Maine coast, not far from the larger island of Islesboro. When I was visiting relatives in Islesboro the Gibsons invited me over. Their island was a domain unto itself with its own fleet of boats. Besides the big house and the studio, where at that time Gibson was painting portraits, there was a stone chapel with a small tower that Gibson and his sons had built with their own hands. From the top of the tower one could look far over the sea in every direction to several other little islands and, to the west, the coast of Maine. That summer day so long ago is scarcely more than a bright miniature in my memory. I remember with what pride Gibson showed me the chapel and some inscriptions cut in the stone, and our mounting the steps to the tower while his beautiful wife waited for us below—but what did we all say to each other? what picture was on the easel in his studio? The day remains only a fragment, and Gibson and his wife are dead. She outlived him for several years, and I occasionally saw her in New York. She remained very handsome, and her thought and phrasing were so apt and fleet that she often left me hopelessly behind. I have had a parallel feeling of heaviness when I have watched the Russian ballet in all its grace and hardihood.

In the middle 1930s I began the composition of some lengthy epistles in heroic couplets. Four of them appeared in *The Atlantic*, one in *The Forum*, one in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and one remained unpublished until its appearance with the other six in *A Letter to Robert Frost and Others* (Knopf, 1937). Except for the "Letter to Queen Nefertiti," which was not published in a periodical, they are satires, and I have never had more fun in composition

since those two summers when I sat by my little lake in Pomfret scribbling the golden afternoons away. The first one, "A Letter to Robert Frost," dealt with our friendship, then of twenty years' duration, touched on the vogues in poetry, the fate of man, and other subjects as they occurred to me at random. I presented it as the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Columbia in 1935. Frost was pleased with the poem, there was favorable opinion when it appeared in *The Atlantic*, and Louis Untermeyer chose it for inclusion in his anthology. "A Letter to James B. Munn," which also appeared in *The Atlantic* and, under the title, "Letter to a Teacher of English," was reprinted in Conrad Aiken's anthology, dealt rather disparagingly with college education and the blight of the Ph.D. Because of its content, I read it with some trepidation as the Phi Beta Kappa poem at the Harvard Tercentenary in 1936, but no missiles were hurled. In the "Letter to Bernard De Voto," there was a brief passage deriding the Communists and fellow travelers who seemed, in 1936, to be taking over American literature. Alas! I little knew what I had to reckon with when I wrote the offending passage. The book containing the seven letters, *A Letter to Robert Frost and Others*, appeared in 1937. A female leftist tore it to pieces in *The Times*, there were threatening letters from individuals and one from a labor union, and in *The New Republic* of October 20, 1937, Granville Hicks produced some violent couplets entitled "A Letter to Robert Hillyer." Offended, but still full of couplets, I answered him in another satire. Malcolm Cowley tried to persuade me to publish my reply in *The New Republic*, of which he was an editor, but Bernard De Voto, who edited *The Saturday Review*, in which my original poem had appeared, urged me not to, pointing out that the reply to my reply would be even more upsetting. Finally, I contented myself with sending a copy of my answer to Granville Hicks personally. In the course of his diatribe, with something more than poetic license, Hicks had referred to me as fat and rich. The only two lines that remain in my memory from my answer are these:

You mock my looks, but glands will play their tricks—  
An ample Hillyer or a shriveled Hicks.

And that, too, is something more than poetic license. The upshot

of all this was that *A Letter to Robert Frost* was killed, and copies are almost impossible to find today. But there were private compensations. For example, Arthur Machen wrote me from England, "I heartily enjoyed the book. I think it a fine thing that in this unutterable age a man should hold up the standard of *Dryden*, of *Pope*, and of *Johnson*." (The italics are Machen's.)

Another book of mine that fell a victim to extraneous controversy was my best and most ambitious work, *The Death of Captain Nemo* (Knopf, 1949). This was published less than a year after my protest concerning the award of the Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound under the auspices of the Library of Congress. The book fell into the hands of a hostile reviewer in *The Times*, who dismissed it in a few airy paragraphs. *The Times* carries great weight, and that fact, combined with the disadvantage of a long poem, alienated readers. Critics much better known than *The Times* reviewer, such as Winfield T. Scott in *The Providence Journal*, Sara Henderson Hay in *The Saturday Review*, Joseph Joel Keith in the California papers, and Harry Hansen in *The Chicago Tribune* praised the book warmly, and I was encouraged by letters from friends such as Mark Van Doren and John Dos Passos, but the book sold only a few hundred copies. My literary catastrophes occurred on the two occasions when I departed from lyric verse. There is a small public for short poems today and almost none for long ones. Perhaps I should add that *The Death of Captain Nemo* received the one-thousand-dollar Lyric Award.

I should be ungrateful, in the course of these random recollections, if I failed to mention some of the editors of periodicals with whom I have had the most friendly relations. When I was twenty I had my first acceptance from a national magazine, *The New Republic*. At that time, *The New Republic* was only half political; a goodly proportion of its contents was devoted to literature and the arts. Philip Littell was the general editor, and that radiant spirit and excellent poet, Ridgely Torrence, was the poetry editor. It was he who accepted my poem. It was called "To a Scarlatti Passepied" and appeared in the issue for February 26, 1916. The poem is all right; I should not be embarrassed to reprint it today. I suppose

that no publication of my work has given me greater joy. John Dos Passos and I spent part of the cheque on a gala dinner at The Venice, an Italian restaurant in Boston that was our undergraduate Mermaid Tavern. I remember that a four-course dinner with a bottle of Chianti cost seventy-five cents. For years thereafter, until his retirement as editor, Ridgely Torrence continued to print my work. I came to know him well subsequently in New York and loved the man. His poetry never received the appreciation it deserved, and now that he and most of his audience are dead, it seems to be forgotten. In these times it is dangerous for a poet to die; the age has no memory at all. Even so great a poet as Robinson is no more than "Richard Corey"—if that—to the younger generation.

Marianne Moore, who edited *The Dial*, was a tireless and stimulating correspondent. She never let a poem go with a mere formal letter of acceptance; she usually had something perceptive to say, and, once in a while, offered a valuable suggestion. Once when I was having a fearful struggle with the quatrain of a poem, "Why not leave it out?" wrote Miss Moore, with the quiet common sense of the Lady from Philadelphia. *The Dial* paid high prices for poetry, and when it went out of existence, Conrad Aiken, who was also a frequent contributor, Theodore Spencer, and I held a sort of wake in the course of which we lamented the extinction of the source of our extra income. Van Wyck Brooks of *The Freeman* was another conscientious editor. His letters of acceptance always left me in the mood to start a new contribution. He is probably the best historical critic we have, and his two main shortcomings, a lack of humor and an insensibility to poetry, are less damaging than they would be to a judicial critic.

*The American Caravan* for 1927 was edited by Van Wyck Brooks, Alfred Kreymborg, Lewis Mumford, and Paul Rosenfeld. Rosenfeld was the editor for my two contributions, the long "Prothalamion" (which also appeared in the English *New Adelphi*) and my prose fantasy, *The Happy Episode*. He wrote me six careful letters about my pieces in *The Caravan*. The following passage is typical: ". . . we are very desirous of having not only the first five chapters of *The Happy Episode*, but the entire nine, if you can see your way clear to letting us. . . . Alfred and I are at one in our

delight over this delicious and aristocratic piece of work. . . . I foresee an important role for this really successful fantasy." Ha! It is completely buried. Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears not only all its sons away but their reams of composition as well.

Few editors nowadays have time for the stimulating literary correspondence that marked the assembling of earlier periodicals. Five happy exceptions to this statement occur to me: Dr. Clarence R. Decker and Charles Angoff of *The Literary Review*, godfathers of this present issue; Howard Moss, a fine poet himself, who edits me for *The New Yorker*; Dr. Francis Brown of *The New York Times Book Review* (I cannot understand how he finds time for his courteous and informative letters), and Edward Weeks of *The Atlantic Monthly*. With Weeks I enjoy a long friendship that goes back to 1919 when we were both newly returned from the war in France. I was beginning my career as teacher at Harvard; he was a student. He has written warmly and appreciatively of those days in *The Atlantic* for March, 1957. The contributions of mine that he liked best were the four long Letters in heroic couplets, of which I have already spoken. For years after their publication he urged me to write more of them. I should gladly have done so, but I couldn't. The vein was worked out.

In my experience, a poet is possessed by one form after another. The persuasion to continue writing satirical epistles after that chapter is closed, at any rate for the time being, is complimentary but fruitless. A poet learns technique as a child learns to read, painfully at first—foot by foot and rhyme by rhyme. When the technique has become second nature, he can, for example, compose a sonnet without being conscious, until the end, of the form he was using. The feeling for a five-stress line is so different from that for a four-stress or six-stress that he does not have to count accents or fear that he will include unequal line-lengths by mistake. The consequence of this instinct for form is that as we exhaust a certain trend of thought we also abandon for a time the measure in which the thought presented itself. When a prevailing mood changes, the technique changes with it, and it becomes impossible to return to a container from which the content has been emptied. This is not to say that it may not be filled again at some later time. The casual reviewer of

poetry, who deals with only a single book, without knowledge of its predecessors, is thus limited to one aspect of a poet's experience.

It is absurd for people to imagine or authors to pretend that writers are not affected by what reviewers say about their work. Art is not affected by adverse opinion, but the artist is embarrassed to have his friends read it. I was once asked to believe that Edwin Arlington Robinson never read reviews of his work, and I might have believed it had he not mentioned to me that my review of his *Tristram* pleased him because he had not thought me sympathetic to his work—a strange misconception on his part, for there are few poets I admire more highly. Personally, I would gladly hang an unfavorable reviewer and promote a friendly one to the highest rank of fame.

*Poems for Music* (Knopf 1947, 1948) was a collection of seventy of my best lyrics, most of them from older volumes. John Holmes, to whom I was already indebted for a fine article on *A Letter to Robert Frost* in the pages of the old *Boston Evening Transcript*, wrote a sensitive appreciation of *Poems for Music* in *The Times*. The book did well and went into two editions. It was followed by *The Suburb by the Sea* (Knopf, 1952), which was largely made up of light satires that had appeared in *The New Yorker*. Before I leave the subject of reviewers, I might mention that there is one admirable poet who has reviewed several of my books with deep understanding. He is the author of the article on my work that appears in this number of *The Literary Review*.

Naturally, I am now chiefly interested in my new book, *The Relic and Other Poems*. In the summer of 1956, my wife and I were invited to dinner in Edgartown by Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Bullock, secretary and president, respectively, of The Academy of American Poets. Among our fellow-guests were Miss May Sarton and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Wilbur. In the course of conversation after dinner, I remarked that I was contemplating a new book. "O be sure to include that Christmas poem from the *Times Book Review*," said Mrs. Wilbur. "By all means. It's a good one," said her poet-husband. Mark Schorer, excellent critic, had already written from California about this poem. He had almost convinced me of its general

merit, but not quite, because it had personal associations for him. Just then May Sarton said, "O, and of course you are going to include 'The Relic.' That is a perfect lyric." I can recall the happy moment now, the cool night wind of summer blowing over the porch where we sat and below us the friendly little harbor of Edgartown where I had learned to sail fifty years before. And so "A Bookman's Christmas" is to be found in my new book, and "The Relic" is the title poem.

If we count my Egyptian book, this is my fifteenth volume of verse. I am reminded of the old Chinese poet, Po Chu-i, who wrote, centuries ago, according to Arthur Waley's translation:

While I am alive riches and honor will never fall to my lot;  
But well I know that after I am dead the fame of my books will live.  
This random talk and foolish boasting forgive me, for today  
I have added Volume Fifteen to the row that stands to my name.

Po Chu-i addressed his poem to two friends. Friends are more important than critics, and their pleasure in a new book adds fuel to the excitement. How I miss Oliver Gogarty at this time! He liked the new book, and was going to contribute something about it to this number of *The Literary Review*. Of late years he had been our most frequent visiting poet at our home in Delaware. It never occurred to me that he would die. He made moments out of his life immortal by setting them to music.

And that, I suppose, is what all poets are trying to do. My life spans many moments, from the time when Cleveland was President and Victoria Queen. I can not quite accustom myself to the world of superhighways, Khrushchev, space-dogs, and a total lack of servants. Yet in all the confusion of change—and changes as radical and swift as I have seen are confusing—the moments that I have tried to hold forever in my verse are the same as those that poets have distilled from the beginning of time. I have sailed boats, been in love, walked the wooded hills, seen war, tasted every season with almost unbearable keenness, and watched kind faces vanish in death. To capture some aspect of experience in a few singing lines has been my only aim; it has, in fact, been a compulsion. It does not matter that my technique for this expression, developed through

so many years in accordance with the art of my predecessors, is now often held against me by young men who do not know a caesura from a spondee. I can only say with the old poet Samuel Daniel that even if none listen

it cannot yet undo

The Love I bear unto this Holy Skill.

This is the Thing that I was born to do:

This is my Scene; this Part must I fulfil.

When one ceases to believe that, it will be time to put down one's pen and say farewell to the world.

### A Filler\*

(For C.R.D. and C.A.)

ROBERT HILLYER

This space was blank. To Sappho I commit it,

Because you said a Sapphic poem would fit it.

Here are her lines, a poet's ample curse,

Upon a vulgar woman deaf to verse:

"When you are dead, not worth remembering,

Who scorned the rose from the Pierian spring,

Through darkest Hades darker you will stray

Among the shadows, more a shade than they."

\* The Editors wrote Mr. Hillyer: "We need a 'filler' for this page. No disrespect to fillers—Sappho's longest and best would fit the space. Have you something?" Mr. Hillyer obliged with "A Filler," a delightful poem, we think, filler or no filler.—C.R.D. and C.A.

## Robert Hillyer as Correspondent

[EDITORS' NOTE: For its own interest and for its importance in the literary history of the past four decades, it is to be hoped that the correspondence of Robert Hillyer will soon be edited and published. In the meantime, we are happy to present nine representative letters. Apart from the opening letter, the correspondence falls into two groups. The first, a group of four letters addressed to the younger poet, Louis Kent, was written from Mr. Hillyer's home in the forties, Old Greenwich, Connecticut, and on board his sloop *Gloriana*. The second group—four letters written to Dr. Thomas H. Johnson, editor of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* and author of *Emily Dickinson, An Interpretive Biography* and other Emily Dickinson studies—was written from Newark, Delaware, Mr. Hillyer's home in recent years.]

Tours, June 14 and 15, 1918

Dear Mother,<sup>1</sup>

That was such an unsatisfactory letter that I sent you last time that I am writing again now while I have the chance. My letters are necessarily irregular, owing to the fluctuation of work.

I forgot to tell you about some lovely friends I have made. Jack Whitehead and I were walking out in the country one Sunday (two weeks ago) to a little town called St. Avertin, when we decided to leave the beaten track and go over the hills. We walked up and up a dusty road for nearly an hour. The day was very hot, so hot that the birds were stilled and the flowers wilted along the sides of the road. There are many old families in this district of the country who, since the Revolution, have sequestered their estates behind lofty stone walls, so that roads like the one on which we were walking are often mere aisles between them. We both became very disgruntled; no forest appeared, no fields, only the narrow way between two enclosures. We could hear cool breezes swishing

1. Lillian Stanley Hillyer (1863-1933).

through trees beyond the forbidding walls, and now and then the splash of a fountain. I was about to drop with fury and fatigue when we noticed a tiny path winding like a crevice between two walls, and leading off to the left. It was so narrow that we could scarcely enter it, but as we followed it it widened until now and then it was large enough to admit the growth of a few stunted apple trees. Under their rather insufficient shade we cooled off a while and then continued along the path. Finally it narrowed again and seemed to come to an end in a wilderness of thorny hedges and tall weeds. I almost groaned I was so disconcerted, and tried to push through the hedge. My groping hands found something metallic; I looked and saw a tiny blue gate with the latch up. Jack and I stepped quickly through and gazed on one of the pleasantest prospects I have ever seen. We were on the top of a hill over which a fresh wind was blowing. The entire plateau was a fairyland of gardens and orchards, arbors and bowers. There was not a soul in sight. After we had got over our astonishment we went quickly along the path until it lost itself in a thick grove of yew trees. We paused a moment, and a quaint figure appeared before us bowing and smiling.

He was a little ancient fellow and would have been quite gnome-like had it not been for a grave and beautiful dignity in his face, which was most impressive even while his eyes were sparkling. He had a trim beard and very red cheeks, eyes as blue as corn-flowers, and his white hair was long and abundant. His costume was a flowered silk dressing gown and Turkey red slippers with pom-poms. We must have stared at him for a long time. Suddenly he said, very slowly and gravely, and with a strong accent, "Health! Jolly gude fellows! Demnition!" Then he smiled and beckoned. We followed him wonderingly through the trees and came to a little pink house, smothered in roses and set into the thick foliage. The door was open. Someone was playing Chopin. In front of the house was a green iron table and some chairs. He motioned us to sit down, disappeared a few minutes, and reappeared presently with a dusty bottle covered with cobwebs. Then the music ceased and the musician joined us.

This is Mlle. Marguerite Dumaine. She is nineteen years old,

looks more English than French, with her light hair, open face, and grey eyes, and has completely the air of frank and informal *savoir faire* that is not cultivated but natural. She speaks a little English of which she is very proud, but as she soon finds that we speak French she abandons her slight English and speaks the most exquisite French I have ever heard—not rattled off like Parisian French, but savoring every syllable, including some of the final *es*.

Well, we sat down; she brought out a beautiful damask table-cloth and old china and silver that would make an American heiress green with envy. Then she brought us a wonderful silver bowl filled with almonds floating on honey and garnished with rose leaves. She brought us strawberries with cream so thick it would not pour and coffee that would have been worthy of a bazaar in Bagdad. Then she opened the wine and sat down.

We exchanged the histories of our lives and hers was somewhat as follows: her family have lived in this Paradise since the fifteenth century, and they built the lovely pink house in the reign of Henri IV at the end of the sixteenth century. They also built a larger house—a chateau—down the road, but this the present Du-maine family have rented to some relatives. I like the little house better, in any case. The house, by the way, has only three rooms and a loft. Low-ceiled, with vast fireplaces and leaded casement windows, it is the best type of the best period of dwelling-house architecture. It is very Elizabethan, but smaller than the smallest English house that ever was built. It is filled with Italian furniture of the Renaissance that would make our choicest mahogany look parvenu. As in old times, the living room is also a bedroom, and the piano and tremendous bed smile across at each other. There are immense plaster candlesticks covered with gold leaf for illumination.

There are two sons in the family. One of them, who is twenty-three, is at the Front (I have sent him ten packages of cigarettes) and the other is a monk. Marguerite told us of the good times they used to have as children, shut up in their little kingdom, and she showed me the great yew tree, covered with vines, that makes a cave under its boughs so large that a party of ten could sit down to dinner inside, where they used to play. In fact, she plays to this day, and we climbed a cherry tree together to shake down some

dessert. She must have been born late in her father's life, for she is only nineteen and he must be all of eighty.

He, by the way, is completely charming. His singular greeting is explained by the fact that he used to have as intimate friends Lord Dufferin, the late viceroy of Ireland, and Lord Allan Campbell, the Scottish peer, and the English that he learned in their company, although almost forgotten, has left some telltale phrases, such as Health! Jolly good fellow! and Demnition! The old man shakes with laughter when he says Demnition! which he does at all pauses in the conversation, with amazing effect. As he went on talking, his English began to come back, little by little; I noticed that he spoke with a broad Scotch, as well as French, accent. He never gets beyond a few words, however, without giving forth a regretful Demnition and relapsing into French.

After supper we all went into the living room and Marguerite played to us. It was extraordinarily beautiful in the quiet room, with the haze of twilight settling over the gardens and fields framed like a picture in the Gothic doorway. The old man knows music. Although condemning it as "demnition Boche," he told us with pride how he had attended the first Wagner performance in the great opera house at Bayreuth. As his daughter played he lost himself completely, cocked his head from side to side, and carefully and delicately led an invisible orchestra with his old, shriveled hands. As she played the first Prelude of Chopin, tears came into his eyes, and at the end he whispered, "*Tout ce qu'on désire; tout ce qu'on a perdu.*"

Soon after, we left.

I shall take Marguerite a copy of my new book (*Sonnets and Other Lyrics*), for though she speaks little English, she hears it and reads it comprehendingly.

All my love, Mother and everybody.

Robert

27 February 1947

Dear Louis,

Everything seems to be working out very well.  
Do not worry about Benét and the stamped envelope. Your

initial enclosure was sufficient. Editors always have envelopes and stamps handy, anyway. With me, it's not really a question of stamps, but of envelopes. Often I have no envelopes large enough. Just the other day I did remember to buy a dozen. Now that I am doing much prose I really need them.

I am glad you take to heart my advice about not hurrying. I am afraid to break up your natural rhythms of work and inspiration by too much outside interference even of an advantageous kind. As for cutting the hawser, that is not a threat but a promise. As long as and as much as you need my help, here I am. It is merely that I do not want you to feel hampered, as time goes on and your career matures, by an unnecessary feeling of obligation. O I don't mean gratitude and friendship—those are the natural responses of which I hope always to be worthy. The sort of thing I mean is undefinable; a feeling of responsibility toward me or my artistic beliefs. In other words, if you ever feel that I am meddling or offering opinions which are merely a digression, say so frankly. Meanwhile, without further consideration of this rather nebulous and remote possibility, do send me all the poems you write, and I will go on carping until you tell me to stop.

Rereading this whole collection, I can get a fairly good grasp of your work as a whole and can offer a few general opinions. The effect of your work is dream-like and reality comes through like lightning lacing a cloud. Nothing is blurred. Everything is washed with clear colours like a fine water-colour; all the objects are equally intense, but things are set at strange juxtapositions with a logic like that of a dream—*Lookingglass* logic, if you will. It is a world turned inside out. That does not, as it would in the case of a bad artist content with abstractions, divorce your work from reality. It is reality clearly and conclusively, but in a mirror. That is one reason why I find your work different from and more effective than most. It is enchanting. I spent two or three hours reading these through and entered your world fully for the first time. I emerged blinking, as into another existence. Now that, I say, is true art.

You are weakest in an occasional temptation to over-embroider. Mind you, embroidery—or tapestry, if you like—is excellent and one of your best accomplishments. But once in a while you become

snarled in your own intricacies or follow a will-o-the-wisp idea or conceit beyond the boundaries of your intention. . . . Yet, even when you do this, to which I object in theory, you are very beguiling. Reading over your "Southern Garden" to find examples of the fault I am describing, I become tangled in its web and admit much beauty. I can say that the passage beginning "The moon is not to be withheld" and ending "the musk of tuberoses" is inferior and that the sudden shift to the polar snows at the end needs a good deal more preparation—not longer but in tone. There is so much beauty in this poem that I long to have you redo it. It needs geography. You start right out with microscopic details. How am I to know that there are lovers there, and a garden bench, and an embarrassed window? Surely the general *mise en scène* would strike the eye of the poet before the snails spinning out obscenities. In this poem your dream is confused and fragmentary, and perhaps that is what I meant when I started to talk of over-embroidering.

I should say that that is your one weakness, and very rarely displayed. The conquest of it is merely to work on as you are working. There is no technical obstacle to be overcome. *La musique avant toute chose!* says Verlaine. If you pressed me at this point for more carping, I might merely add that as time goes on you will probably have more laughter in your work—as in "Le Roi d'Yvetot." But I am not sure that that would be an advantage if you had to lose some other quality to accommodate it. Your strange world is not dark; it is bathed in its own luminance.

It does seem amazing that we "met" only eighteen months ago. Perhaps I never told you that my little book on versification was distributed in the camps and that my chief war work consisted in corresponding with some fifty or sixty young men who wanted criticism. It was almost a full time job occasionally! Out of the whole company you were the only one. I wonder if I still have your first letter tucked away somewhere. Probably. And I wonder what I first said to you. I do know that I did not have an instant's hesitation in recognizing your power. It has all been an idyllic experience. Sometime—perhaps when your book comes out—you and Maxine and I must have some sort of celebration.

The doldrums? They are still with me, as far as working is

concerned. I think I told you that with fierce endeavours I overcame my natural inertia and completed the long short story for which *Good Housekeeping* has been yammering for a year. I sent it in, and the editor at once betook himself to the hospital for a major operation from which he has not yet recovered. Doubt as to the depths of my own well? O certainly. Often and often. But I am now at a point where I am discarding rather than adding. Chrétien de Troyes says somewhere, "It is better to be silent than inadequate." And the psalmist says, "I will sing unto the Lord a new song." Until I can follow the example of the psalmist I will keep the percept of the wise Chrétien. I could repeat myself suavely again and again, but I do not want to do that. You are very young as poet, and you will not be in danger of repeating yourself for years to come. And even when you are—as with me now—that is no cause for fear. It is merely that the new impulses are spaced further apart.

Thanks for reminding me of Breasted. I thought my memory had left me completely. When you said you went on a flying trip to the library at Alexandria, I took it for granted you meant the Alexandrian Library in Egypt. That's the way my mind works! Space and time are nothing at all to me. If you tapped my mind at random you might find me centuries apart within five minutes. If you had told me that you fell into conversation with Ptolemy Soter strolling toward the Pharos, no doubt would have assailed me until a second reading of your letter. I really did not have any notion that you meant Alexandria, Virginia, until I reread your letter. (But I am doubting Ptolemy Soter and the Pharos, for it wasn't built in his time.)

Chamberlin's *Sayings of Queen Elizabeth* is a wonderful collection.

I didn't have many comments to put on the poems,—except for two or three. They seem quite achieved.

Sincerely yours,

Robert

P.S. I am not permitting myself to express the excitement I feel in regard to your prospects. Truly, I am re-living my own past.

27 May 1947

Dear Louis,

Just after I finished my letter of yesterday (which I enclose) your own arrived, together with the poems, which I have read carefully twice. I want to say something about these quite frankly. Individually, the large majority of them fulfill my expectations of you as a very fine lyric poet. Collectively, they seem too much of one mood,—and a mood, curiously enough, which does not quite communicate you as I know you from your letters and our one brief meeting. It is like the remark Arnold quoted and made famous about Gray: "He never spoke out." What is sticking in your craw? I wonder. Do you mind my saying this? Is this too personal? I find it difficult to analyze. There is an opaque subterranean quality in your work (you have several times symbolized it in the mole, the burrow, and underground) which is enchanting but too unbroken. I wonder if when I say this I am merely being discouraging and urging you to a change of mood which would be artificial and self-conscious. The reason that I do not think so is because I believe this prevalent mood to be partly derivative without your knowing it. The air sags with the dejection of poets. . . .

I haven't got at what I want to, at all. It is not an objection to what you are doing; it is a desire for variety, perhaps; sunlight, immediacy. Now if I were to improvise something about you, I would think of a passage from one of your letters about your out-of-hours friendships, and I might start a portrait thus: "We sat in the sun on the grass, and opened our picnic boxes; Maxine was there, and Bess and the Browns and the Foxes; and all day we talked about . . . what did we talk about lolling at ease? O well, at least we forgot the files and the fees." That is silly, of course; all I want to get at is a plea for immediacy in the sun. You do go underground at the sound of the first robin! You remember how Layamon opens the *Brut*? with that touching and lively picture of himself. It is what one most remembers from the *Brut*. People suddenly come at you from old pages when least expected, and all have arisen again. That is why Pope delights us as a lyric personage in spite of his see-saw; he is so patently here! Your Roi d'Ys comes back to me in a burst of sunlight. Some of your others, too. That

is why I am not wholly afraid of saying this. Yes, yes, that is what I want—from any poet. Not only light but people, people. The poet himself and his friends.

Speaking of which, here is a piece I did the other day. (This is a random association; please never suspect me of sending you anything of mine as an example!)

These golden tendrils pricked with green  
On sunny boughs that hang so fair  
Enwreath my thoughts as though a queen  
Were come in Progress to my heart.  
I stand in fantasy, apart  
From mounting counsels of despair.

In musty rooms, with Kafka's book  
My friends in nightmare dalliance lie  
Nor give the sun a wondering look;  
They ponder nothingness with Sartre  
While lark songs like the spires of Chartres  
Arise with chiming to the sky.

These are the days that brought to birth  
The earliest Poet and his friends;  
He sang the starry song of Earth  
And thus, by dreaming justified  
With light the darkness where he died  
And whence again the spring ascends.

Kafka, Freud, Marx, Sartre, and so many others of the legion of the damned: they are all about us; they seduce the dreams of youth and ratify the despair of age. And they are all totally false. It is as if mankind preferred the nightmare to the (possible) shining reality.

I wonder if you would like "Miss Helen Lang":

Who now remembers Miss Helen Lang  
The music teacher, who loved to bang  
Beethoven loud on the listening air  
When windows were open everywhere?

In the hot suburban afternoon

Both leaves and people hung in a swoon,  
Limp on the trees and limp in the swing,  
Except for Miss Helen Lang, poor thing.

"Her piano keys are the keys of Hell,"  
My mother said. "She plays very well,"  
Answered Aunt Ella to be perverse;  
Aunt Marion's "Lawsy!" was like a curse.

My aunts are dead and so is my mother;  
I suppose that I and my sisters and brother  
Alone remember Miss Helen Lang  
Who loved Beethoven played with a bang.

Be as frank on the subject of my work as I am on the subject of yours. If you like it half as well, on the whole, I'll be satisfied.

The verdict from Farrar and Strauss is very disheartening and I am delighted that you have surmounted that superficial first impression. I think it might be well to try William Sloane Associates, 119 West 57, N.Y. 19. The poetry editor is a lady named Helen Stewart, who, according to some letters I have from her, has some respect for my opinion. Of course, one never can tell. I am enclosing a letter to her . . . no, on second thought I'll send it directly. I'll tell her to approach you. . . . Damn it, I can not make up my mind. That is the penalty of having been born smack under Gemini. . . . I have decided to enclose it with this, and you can send it on to Miss Stewart with your mss. If Sloane fails you, we'll try Knopf or a small but excellent publishing house where I have friends, Thomas Crowell.<sup>1</sup> If you prefer that I write Miss Stewart from here, just hold my letter to her and tell me so. I am at your command.

I must rush. This is all inchoate. Do not let anything I have said make you think that I have any general disapproval; I am merely looking for a note which was in your earlier things and which is now in abeyance.

Yours,  
Robert

<sup>1</sup> Louis Kent's *Declensions of the Air* was subsequently published by E. P. Dutton, through the good offices of Louise Townsend Nicholl, and won the Shelley Memorial Award in 1949.

P.S. Thanks for the tip about "Love for Love." I'll see it. And I'm so glad you're both well.

8 July 1947

Dear Louis,

Hard on the heels of my outgoing letter comes yours with the ballad. I don't like the ballad stanza, either, and practically never use it. But one must try it, to keep the record complete. I'll never ask you for any French forms, anyway.

Now, as to Herr Bruckmann's translation of your Pantoum. My German has retreated to that small section of the Rhine where the Lorelei combs her golden hair—or combs her hair with a golden comb, and I feel so *traurig*, I don't know why. O yes, I can also tell a German girl that she *bist wie eine* bloom, but that would not get me very far toward opening the doors of bliss. My ancient Egyptian is a little better, and my Danish quite appreciably so. My four years of German were ill-spent; I never liked the language, which seemed to be suffering fatty degeneration of the vowels. I can, however, pronounce it beautifully, without knowing what it means, and the translation *sounds* very well, as Anatole France once said to me concerning a poem in English, of which language he knew not a word and was rather proud of it. Foolish man!

I am grateful for the copy of "A Royal Pickle." It is delightful. And I am so pleased that you liked Neale's book. It is exciting, isn't it? What a complex and magnificent person Elizabeth was! I can not find another person in history who ruled wholly for the sake of others.

The second version of the ballad is better than the first. I like the "My true love hath my heart and I have his" idea of the fourth stanza. Maybe the poem is too metaphysical in tone for the simplicity of the stanza. Perhaps with a simpler theme, you'd have liked the stanza better. But it is a tinkly stanza.

This is just a hasty postscript to my other letter.

Someone just called up in amazement to find me alive. He heard three months ago that I was dead. I don't like the experience at all. Who is wishing me hence before my time?

I know Robert Fitzgerald himself, his poetry not so well.<sup>1</sup> I shall take the liberty of passing on your remarks to him, for they will please him. He came to my house in Boston years ago in company with an old friend of mine, Dudley Fitts. About six months ago in the Harvard Club, we met again for the first time in nearly twenty years, since when I have seen much of him. He has just married—for the first time—a delightful girl. (Slight ambiguity in that sentence, but you know what I mean.) He is about thirty-six, I should guess, very shy and silent, square jaw, pink face, sharp features. Plump. He was looking for a sloop when I saw him at the Club, and one look at *Gloriana* convinced him that he wanted a boat as much like her as possible. So I took him to the builder, and he has almost a replica. At present he has a job with *Time*, doing book reviews.

A rainy day, and I am at anchor till Thursday. I'll send you a thought from some remote cove at sundown. I never know where I'll be. It's as good as visiting furran parts.

Yours,  
Robert

P.S. No, I did not review R.F.'s book. Maxine's association is probably from my writing you before—I'm almost sure I did—about him and his sloop,—the *Miranda*.

16 August 1948

Dear Louis,

It is near midnight, and my comments on the poems are in an abbreviated phrasing which may sound captious or impatient, but you know they are not so. None of the poems in this collection knocks me galley-west like some of your perfect pieces, but there are parts in nearly all, and two or three that could equal your best, I think, with a little revising. Let me know concerning the proportion of your agreement.

You remark of the poem I sent you that it has a dark implication. But surely, my dear poet! I hope I'd never be the poet of facile

<sup>1</sup> In the years since this letter was written, I have become familiar with Mr. Fitzgerald's poetry, and consider his collection, *In the Rose of Time*, one of the most beautiful of recent books of poetry.—(R.H.)

optimism or unrelieved cheerfulness. I suppose I have had as many suicidal moods as other men—perhaps more—but I always conclude with G. K. Chesterton, "I think I will not hang myself today." The coast of my life is littered with wrecks of many of my richest hopes, and in my kingdom most of the thoroughfares where once processions passed are irretrievably choked with weeds. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the whole orchestra of delight tunes up at some small thing like the turn of sun on a leafy suburban street or the flip of an unexpected wave. My happiness is no longer dependent on the realization of any grandiose hope; it is a ghost of its former self, supported by a million filaments so fine as to be almost invisible. Yet it is happiness of a sort, and the creation of happiness is a definite job, not a mere waiting for something to ripen in a fortunate sun. I think you will find me as dark as any, but not prevalently dark, for that would be a lie. . . .

It seems to me an absurd inconsistency to give voice to unrelieved pessimism. It is, in fact, fraudulent: a self-deception. If non-being is better than being, then all creation is obviously evil. Robinson Jeffers, for example, committed a sad error in bringing children into the world: either his work is a lie of cosmic proportion or he succumbed to desire and thus created new individuals to partake of something which, according to his account, is damnable; to wit, life itself. I have no patience with such folly. Of course, the fact is that he does think life an experience worth having and passing on. His work is thus merely an excess of spitefulness against life. Thomas Gray had a right to his pessimism; he never bequeathed it. But dear me, the whole subject exasperates me so that I can not discuss it. The wilful contemplation of the destructive, the abhorrent, and the frustrate is the last degenerate whine of a decayed romanticism, the epitome of self-pity and sentimentalism. The Music of the Spheres becomes a louder Song of the Shirt. Modern literature is almost without exception sheer crap.

The exceptions include your best work which so moved me when I first saw it and continues to do so. As long as you want me as critic, however, I will bellow and complain when I see you touched by influences which have no place in the achievement of so fine an artist as yourself. I wish you would read nothing but the

great poets for years to come. I wish you would completely eschew all magazines, and I will not even say all the "little" magazines. Unconsciously, the modern manner and mood do colour your literary experience here and there, and I fear permanent damage if you continue to let the garbage be dumped in your waters. Pollution is unescapable. If not gay, at least simple-hearted: what could be better?

(You know, in the summer months, when I am Skipper, I become arrogant and give orders; by Christmas time I'll be meek as a lamb again.)

A young poet named Peter Viereck is, to my amazement, an enthusiast for my work. He astonished me by a fanfare in last October's *Atlantic*, and even more so by a shower of compliments, encouragements, and letters. Since I think he is, with yourself, among the very best of the new generation, I am deeply moved and pleased. He says that my poems are a "flawless fusion of eloquence, meaning, and rhythm." My God! Isn't that wonderful! Unconsciously, I find I have resigned myself to a kind of pre-death death as estimable poet; I didn't realize it until this unexpected spate of praise from one so in the forefront of the newcomers. I enclose an interesting poem of his that he sent me.

I have not been ashore much. This is my first evening in Warwick Towers for some time. I feel sad to think that a month hence my seafaring must end. There is so much I could describe for you and Maxine if we had time for talk. You once said you'd like a picture of *Gloriana* under sail, so I enclose one, not only under sail but running wing-and-wing to boot.

The bitch-goddess Fortuna has not been kind to me this year, and it is lucky that Kenyon invited me to be a visiting professor.

How is the book coming along?

Louise Nicholl went to the hospital last week for an operation, and I dreaded cancer, of course, as did she herself. Yesterday I had a letter from her saying that all was well; the growth, which has been removed, was non-malignant and she goes home tomorrow. That was a great relief to me.

The music for "The Garden of Artemis" is finished, the musicians are in rehearsal, and the grand performance is to be in

Beverly, Massachusetts, on Sunday the 29th. I am going to Beverly for it; it promises to be quite an occasion.

There is little other news. I have written little or nothing. The weather has been unexpectedly fine, and this is the windiest summer I have had so far on the Sound, which makes for swift and happy voyaging. I think I wrote you that I was cruising to New London. It was a fine success,—only two days each way, the entire length of Connecticut, and for a boat without any engine that is good going, even if not record speed. They told me at New London I was the first boat without an engine to make the run from Greenwich in many a year. There is so much to tell.

But it is now after one o'clock. I must to sleep. Does this rambling epistle annoy you?

My best to Maxine.

Yours ever,  
Robert

P.S. The only masterpiece of unrelieved pessimism is a Greek epitaph, which, translated, goes thus: "I never married and I would my father had not."

16 September 1955

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I was deeply moved and pleased by your kind letter.

My review of your book [*New York Times Book Review*] was a sort of culmination of my long relationship to the work of E.D., beginning in 1922 with an essay in the old *Freeman* and continuing through many reviews and episodes. These latter come back to me in sudden flashes: Amy Lowell turning to me at dinner and exclaiming, "Mr. Hillyer, do you realize that there are twelve hundred Dickinson manuscripts in an old barn in Amherst that may burn down any moment!" and the Centenary meeting in 1930 at Mount Holyoke, where Mrs. Todd and I were fellow speakers amid an atmosphere charged with the hatreds from the old controversy; and that same year at a meeting at the Ritz in Boston, Mme. Bianchi coming to me, hands outstretched, saying, "Am I really so dreadful, Mr. Hillyer?" (She was charming, personally, but I had just panned her edition of *Further Poems in the Atlantic*.) "Very well, if you

think Mr. Hampson and I are such bad editors, come to Amherst and I'll give you *all* the material." (Of course, she didn't mean it, and I would not have been competent in any case.)

The Dickinson atmosphere was strange and rank in the old days. I was of the "Todd party," and Mrs. Bingham [Mrs. Todd's daughter—Mrs. Todd was the original editor of Emily Dickinson's *Leaves of Grass*] and I sometimes correspond to this day.

Your achievement will now be a part of literary history. That my compressed (and somewhat cut, even so) review managed to convey my admiration, gives me the greatest pleasure. Thanks for writing.

Sincerely yours,  
Robert Hillyer

23 September 1955

Dear Mr. Johnson,

There was never a more graceful and gracious inscription than the one you wrote on the flyleaf of your biography of Emily Dickinson. Thank you for that and for the book. I am half way through the book and find it admirable.

The next day after your presentation copy arrived, I received a copy from Francis Brown, the editor of the *Times Book Review*, for review. He had assigned me only 600 words, but I'll condense as best I may.

I enclose two items. Have you ever seen a letter from Maggie? [Maggie was the loyal servant in the Dickinson household.] Perhaps you have seen this one; I don't know whether or not Mrs. Pearl showed it around. As I remember it, she had several Dickinson items, but she is doubtless dead by this time. I also enclose a copy of my old essay in the *Freeman*. (Please return it to me). I send it largely for its historical interest, for it was one of a few pebbles that started the Dickinson landslide of the '20s. You will note that I speak of her as almost unknown, which, at the time, she was. About 1922 I went to Little, Brown's office and had a talk with Mr. Jenkins, who informed me that he intended to let the copyright of her works lapse.

Well—more some other time, if you continue to be interested.

And do drive over some day.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Hillyer

P.S. In reading my little piece, please remember that at that time little information about E.D. was available. Mrs. Todd told me all I knew.

1 November 1955

Dear Mr. Johnson,

It pleased me deeply that my *Freeman* article first aroused your interest in E.D. It is strange how we read things and forget the name of the author: I do it frequently.

In my review of your biography I made one point that you may or may not agree with. At any rate it is worth consideration. You speak of the influence of the metrics of hymnody on E.D.'s technique. That seems to me indisputable. But I go further and ascribe to the same source her strange grammar and word-order. The versifiers of the psalms never hesitated to use, for the sake of rhyme, a subjunctive where an indicative was called for; indeed, their grammar and word-order are often very wrenched. The King James Bible (and of course that was, as you say, the major influence) does not show any such syntactical eccentricities.

I don't know when my review will appear. Mr. Brown has had it for a month. The Christmas rush of best-sellers may shoulder it aside. I hope not.

We seldom come to N.Y.; in fact, we haven't been there in almost a year. It is probable, however, that we'll go there during the Christmas holidays. My headquarters will be the St. Anthony Club at 4 East 64th. But I'll let you know the dates if we decide to go. I think we both need a bit of relaxation.

The order of your material in the E.D. book seemed so natural and effective that I did not feel called upon to comment on it.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Robert Hillyer

26 February 1956

Dear Mr. Johnson—I mean Tom,

I was delighted to see that your books won an award (far too small a token) from the Poetry Society. Time was when I used to attend those dinners; in fact, I presided over three of them, and this one I am sorry to have missed. We could not, though, have had much to say amid the hubbub.

At a meeting of a small group in Philadelphia, called the Literary Fellowship, Bob Spiller and I vied in praising you and your work. He spoke of bringing us together in Philadelphia.

It is after midnight, and I see that the vagueness of the hour made me revert to an initial formality in addressing you, but I have amended it.

Now that your Dickinson desk is closed once and for all, I wonder where your great energies will be turning. Or are you treating yourself to a long rest? I should be interested to know how the Dickinson books are going.

For me this has been an unproductive winter. I think that the weather, so unbrokenly hostile, reminds me of the almost forty years I have spent being out of the fashion, and I am more in the mood to edit my old poems than to write new ones. Of course, the kaleidoscope keeps on turning, and my pattern may come up.

Drop me a word when you care to.

Yours, as ever,  
Robert

P.S. Have you read Santayana's bloodless letters? I think that he and Henry Adams should be consigned to each other's company.

# Poems by Robert Hillyer

## A Ballade of Revelation

Miracles cannot be produced at will—  
I had no hint that lowering summer day,  
High on the heather-covered little hill  
That wanders upward from Katama Bay,  
Of any exaltation, till one ray  
Of sunlight touched me, and a thousand springs  
Of life leaped in me from the dead who lay  
In the old graveyard where the shadow clings—  
And I had penetrated to the heart of things.

To me their lichenèd stones were the doorsill  
Of some two hundred years of slumber; they  
Awakening in me, wakened too the thrill  
Of sharing beyond self the infinite play  
Of spirit in whatever form it may  
Design its being. In outgoing rings  
Of clear sensation, wondrously astray,  
I was aware of all that weeps or sings,  
And I had penetrated to the heart of things.

I was the dune grass in the wind, the quill  
That speeds the white gull up the clouded gray;  
I was the old man watching, hunched and still,  
The swimmer, and the dancers in the hay;  
I was the dead who wake but cannot stay,  
Whose humble dust has freed them to be kings;  
I was the generation on the way,  
That, bringing beauty, knows not what it brings,  
And I had penetrated to the heart of things.

Prince, there is little more for me to say;  
 My flight was brief on momentary wings.  
 Let me remember—only this I pray  
 Amid life's new rebuffs and buffettings—  
 That I once penetrated to the heart of things.

### The Descendant

Behold the poet seated at his desk,  
 His Muse attending and his pen uncapped,  
 His thoughts melodious and picturesque,  
 His mood in order, his emotion rapt.

But still he hesitates, while ghost by ghost  
 Dead poets seep into his mind like fog.  
 He can't avoid them, for he is, like most  
 Contemporary bards, half pedagogue.

Language is old, and he was born too late.  
 Homer had no forerunners, nor had Dante;  
 Virgil had Homer, Chaucer a clean slate,  
 And Shakespeare's background was benignly scanty.

These poets picked the words with the dew on them  
 In gardens where no cutworm critic gnawed.  
 Born to their laurels with no need to don them,  
 Uncrowned they walked with men; with gods, unawed.

The first are best—all languages affirm it.  
 From the Elizabethan height can come  
 Only a downward path, though we may term it  
 Wasteland or Milkwood or Byzantium.

Behold the poet sweating like a Moor  
 Over his symbol, irony, or witticism:  
*Parturiunt montes et nascetur*  
 Ridiculous verse or explicative criticism.

## The Person from Porlock

A person from Porlock's  
 Arrival on business  
 Burst in on the trance  
 Wherein Coleridge was boating  
 Down Alph, the dark river,  
 The stream of Romance.  
 Oars jumped from the oarlocks,  
 The oarsman awoke,  
 And left the word "Paradise"  
 Drowsily floating  
 Where reverie broke.

The person from Porlock  
 Intruding on business  
 Has left us no name  
 Though he shortly became  
 The proverbial warlock,  
 Philistine in fame,  
 Who eternally goes  
 On his errands of business  
 To waken the poet  
 And hammer Mount Abora  
 Back into prose—  
 A bore and a nuisance,  
 A figure of fun,  
 (Or was he a pretext,  
 When all's said and done?)

Nowadays more than ever  
 The bard must contrive  
 To take time by the forelock,  
 For prompt to arrive  
 Is the person from Porlock,  
 Pacing the hall.

And the poem that cannot  
Innately survive  
The importunate call  
Of the person from Porlock  
Will certainly never  
Be written at all.

### The Garden

There is no doubt the garden's haunted  
Though nothing tangible appears;  
As soon as you come through the gateway  
You'll feel unreasonable tears  
For all things lost—love, light, and music,  
And order choked with tangled years.

Romance that ventures here by starlight  
Sparkling on a single jewel,  
Will find its ardor soon extinguished  
With only memory for fuel.  
And yet, if nothing's left for lovers,  
There's nothing evil here or cruel.

Only, each year the rose grows smaller,  
And wild as weeds forget-me-not  
Invades the flower beds from the border,  
And rosemary fills the central plot.  
If we pulled up these plants and bushes  
They'd bleed like screaming mandrake root.

They've pierced so deep the soil of seasons,  
Drunk so much life from bygone lives,  
They breathe a reminiscent fragrance  
Drugged with desire that still survives.  
There is no doubt the garden's haunted,  
And will be till the frost arrives.

## The Interpreter

Up from the centuries of sand,  
Still dreaming of dead autocrats,  
In blurred Sumerian splendor stand  
Palaces, shrines, and ziggurats.

The kings are not less arrogant  
For being dead four thousand years,  
Still in this cruel frieze they plant  
The stony forest of their spears,

While sacrificial bulls await  
—Bowed down as though they understood—  
The priest who stabs to consecrate  
The godhead gushing in their blood.

But kings and gods could speak no more  
To tell of ritual or battle,  
Had not some lowly auditor  
Been counting up his master's cattle.

Only his sun-baked cuneiform  
Provides the lost linguistic key  
That can this tongue-tied rock transform  
To eloquence of majesty.

## The Pavilion by the Sea

The white pavilion by the surf  
Is delicate as paper lace,  
Set in its little park of turf,  
Inevitably out of place.

Here in the dreamy afternoons  
While heat dissolves the world outside,  
Cool as cloud-shadows in the moon's  
Pale driftway, waltzers wheel and glide.

The chamber concert starts at ten—  
Vivaldi, Monteverdi, Lully,  
A little Mozart now and then,  
All noted and applauded duly.

At stroke of midnight, fan and scarf  
Are gathered up; goodnights are bowed;  
While through the open doors, the surf  
Pounds nearer, mercilessly loud.

This side the eighteenth century,  
No lights more gently flow to dark  
Than those that fade out by the sea  
From the pavilion in the park.

# Robert Hillyer

*A Poet's First Forty Years*

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN the current critical conviction that in an era stamped largely with experiment in poetry it is correct to acknowledge that Walter de la Mare wrote admirable lyrics in a great tradition and the current esteem for young Richard Wilbur achieving a similar excellence, there is the consistent but unacknowledged achievement of Robert Hillyer. I am not going to be defensive about his work; only, I think it proper to begin with the plain observation that Hillyer has written better poems than those of some contemporary poets much more talked about; that he is a traditionalist by conviction and with a personal skill not to be confused with, or lost among, the thousands of helpless parrots in the art. In his way Hillyer's status is what those of us devoted to many kinds of poetry and knowledgeable in literary history usually consider salutary: he is unfashionable. Yet to enshrine de la Mare on the one hand and applaud Wilbur (and quite a few new, young lyricists) on the other and to ignore—in the generation between—Robert Hillyer, is ignorance indeed.

Of course in the past decade there has been a confusion of Hillyer's reputation to which he himself made the largest single contribution. I think this should be mentioned at once, for the sake of the record and in hope of getting it out of the way. His attack on the Pound-Eliot school of poetry was so widely publicized, it became such a confounded mixture of poetry, politics and personalities, it drew to his side such *papier-mâché* versifiers far more embarrassing to his position than to the opposition, that Hillyer as poet was submerged by Hillyer as champion of the conventionalists.

Whether he was right in his opinions—and it must be remembered that, though on varying grounds, such different poets as

William Carlos Williams and Robert Graves have also attacked the Pound-Eliot influence—no one, really, can yet decide. Whether he was right (that is, well-advised, wise, effective) in making the attack is another moot question. For one, I happen to think he was not—if for no other reason than the resultant obfuscation of Hillyer's own verse. Self-sufficiency, undefended, is important to any poetry. Yet I hasten to say that I come not to revive the controversy but to dismiss it; it has begun to fade away and it has no part in the essential concern, Hillyer's forty years of craftsmanship as a dedicated poet.

His new book, *The Relic and Other Poems*, is an excellent summation of his kinds of poetry, often on his most expert level. Its title poem is one of those seamless lyrics. Here is the second of its two stanzas, about a thrush skull:

Beneath the tree lies music's skull,  
The tree a skeleton of spring,  
And both, perhaps, are beautiful  
Though leaves and thrush no longer sing;  
But, growing old, I have a reason  
For wishing some divine delay  
Could hold a song beyond its season  
And hide the thrush's skull away.

And there are others, most notably "The Bats," a poem of the unspeakable, of the repressed and suppressed, done with an extraordinary deftness of unpointed-to internal rhyme.

The mood predominant in the new book is that of "The Relic": of late afternoon, autumnal, and frost threatens the flower. And here his wit comes into more engaging play than ever before. Since "Mool" ("Summer is over, the old cow said") and such other relatively early poems as those beginning "Full length on the hills of heaven / Daphnis lay at half past seven" and "Paris was the comeliest man / That ever filched a wife," there has been an enlarging tendency toward light verse. *The Suburb by the Sea*, 1952, most fully represents this; it is brought to a still higher polish of rhyme and epigram in many of the poems of sections III and IV in *The Relic*. Not always, not exactly, light verse; often with overtones

quite as meaningful as more "serious" poetry. But it is the underlying humor which sets the tone. If here there is resignation to age and death, it nonetheless takes such a thing as a rollercoaster ride for its symbol. The awareness is good-natured even while sharp. "As friendships, after one effusive meeting, / Sink to acquaintanceships on second greeting."

There are some sea-going lyrics, rather slight, in section II, and in the final section a good deal of versifying of occasions which, again, Hillyer does more gracefully if not more significantly than most people.

All-in-all, then, *The Relic* displays him at fullest maturity: his frequent slightness, his exercise of wit, his deeper-reaching lyrics and, everywhere, his integrity in the service of perfected style—which has been lifelong. *His* theories of style which are, probably, unique in contemporary American verse. From Edna St. Vincent Millay up and down there have been other successfully traditional lyricists, but I think few besides Hillyer with an intellectual conviction, a formulation of poetic principles.

"I began," he reminisced in *The Lyric* eleven years ago, "in protest to the rising tide of revolt, to cultivate a traditional technique nothing short of meticulous. By the time I went to France [1917] I had recovered from my first shock on hearing that 'metre and rhyme are done for' and was beginning to believe I had followed the right course."

His esthetic has been utterly consistent from the first book, *Sonnets and Other Lyrics*, 1917, to *The Relic*. All the way along, his pastorals and sonnets and lyrics, his light verse and occasional verse, have been remarkably of a piece. As with all poets, there has been unevenness in the work. There has also been growth, a maturity established in *The Seventh Hill*, 1928. And though in its consistency of style and tone much of his work may be said to "run together," there have been variations within the norm. Certain poems, while not "unlike" many others of his poems, nevertheless stand out. In short, for all his seeming simplicity and coherence, Robert Hillyer is a difficult poet to assess, just because his tamer moments and his exceptionally happy ones are tuned to the same fork.

To begin with, what precisely are the sources of this "traditional technique nothing short of meticulous"? In a speech at Marshall College in March, 1957, Hillyer described Elizabethan lyrics and we may take the passage as a catalogue of his own poetics, a summary of his own intentions.

"They echo courtly music and folk song," he said, "they show the effects of classical prosody as well as our old Anglo-Saxon accentual versification; their themes range from the pastoral to satire, from carefree madrigals to slow-moving dirges; they transmute into purest English cadence, themes from Horace, Virgil, Anacreon, the Greek anthology, the French poets of the time, Arthurian myths, native ballads, yet all of them are seemingly as new and spontaneous as the first notes of dawn."

Current criticism would raise an immediate question here. I shall raise another and try to answer them both.

The first of course is, what does such an esthetic have to do with a mid-twentieth-century American poet? Whatever he wants it to. Perhaps in our urgency for an "American poetry" we have been over-cautious of the English traditions; it is those we have had to break away from—one hopes, without schematization, as Americans naturally writing an American verse. No one thinks it odd to borrow poetics from the French or the Chinese. Hillyer's example would signify not to be afraid of the British. And anyway, where do you draw the line? Is it reprehensible if a young American poet, say, models himself on Campion but not if he models himself on Auden?

My further question is, to what extent may a poetry not *use* its traditions but attempt to *reproduce* them? Writing of Hillyer, Louis Untermeyer observed that "On the surface the verse seems to lack that sense of discovery which distinguishes poetry from versification. But this is only because Hillyer's technique and idiom are traditional. His experiences, if not unique, are significant and his utterance, though full of foreign and unmistakable accents, has unmistakable authority." I suspect it is not perfectly possible to reproduce poetic traditions: times and the poet's personality are bound to make the desirable alterations. Yet my question can be answered simply: To the extent he can get away with it. To the

extent, that is, he can justify it by producing a beautiful thing. Thus "Pastoral V":<sup>1</sup>

So ghostly then the girl came in  
I never saw the turnstile twist  
Down where the orchard trees begin  
Lost in a reverie of mist.

And in the windless hour between  
The last of daylight and the night,  
When fields give up their ebbing green  
And two bats interweave their flight,

I saw the turnstile glimmer pale  
Just where the orchard trees begin,  
But watching was of no avail,  
Invisibly the girl came in.

I took one deep breath of the air  
And lifted up my heavy heart;  
It was not I who trembled there  
But my immortal counterpart.

I knew that she had come again  
Up from the orchard through the stile,  
Without a sign to tell me when,  
Though I was watching all the while.

Now what can criticism do with that kind of poem? Nothing essential. It contains an element of mystery which I think marks the best of Hillyer's poems, but I shall come back to that later. Altogether it is perfect song. Criticism can point to the impeccable ear, the beautifully managed echoes and repetitions, the utterly unscarred technique; but that is no more than to say that it is a lovely poem. All talk of "tradition" or "convention" in any sense of dispraise is ridiculous in the face of a perfect performance.

However, we must glance briefly at the dangers of this lyric

<sup>1</sup> This and the following poem, "Remote," are from *The Collected Verse of Robert Hillyer*. The third poem quoted is from *Pattern of a Day*. Both volumes are published by Knopf. The three poems are quoted in full by permission of the publisher and the author.

tradition, for it has them. If its grace runs too thin, if its tone runs too sweet, if its liveliness as tradition goes to sleep in nostalgia, then we get—well, we get Hillyer's lesser poems. There is a part of Hillyer, and he makes no bones about it either in his verse or his occasional pronouncements, which would seem to regret his living not in the time of the greater but in that of the minor Elizabethans.<sup>1</sup> This is the Hillyer who hangs around gardens too much, the Hillyer who with Miniver Cheevy

... mourned the ripe renown  
That made so many a name so fragrant;  
He mourned Romance, now on the town,  
And Art, a vagrant.

When the dulcet tone is thinned so that the reader is neither told nor asked enough for it to matter, or when the musical analogies are pushed so close as to exist for their own sakes, then Hillyer is carried off from us by mere brilliant facility.

On the other hand—very much on the other hand—we find this, entitled "Remote":

The farthest country is Tierra del Fuego,  
That is the bleakest and the loneliest land;  
There are the echoing mountains of felspar,  
And salt winds walking the empty sand.

This country remembers the birth of the moon  
From a rocky rib of the young earth's side;  
It heard the white-hot mountains bellow  
Against the march of the first flood tide.

<sup>1</sup> Editors' note: In response to our enquiry on this point, Mr. Hillyer wrote as follows: "I don't think I ever expressed any desire, unless in the hyperboles of private conversation, to live in any age but this one. I think that this is a dreadful century, but, having groaningly adjusted myself to it, I don't think I should feel at home in any other. For one thing, consider the digestive powers one would have to command to survive for even a few days in the Elizabethan age. I believe if I could choose another age than this one to live in, and granting that I should be among fortune's favored, I'd choose ancient Egypt. The Egyptians must have solved most of the problems of day-to-day life, seeing that they evolved a civilization that lasted almost unchanged for more than twice the length of the Christian era. An Egyptian of A.D. 1 could have conversed with an Egyptian of 3000 B.C.; we should not be able to converse with Chaucer, a mere six hundred years ago."

I lifted a shell by the glass-green breakers  
 And heard what no man has heard before,  
 The whisper of steam in the hot fern forest  
 And slow feet crunching the ocean floor.

I saw the slanted flash of a seagull  
 When a sheaf of light poured over the clouds,  
 I heard the wind in the stiff dune grasses,  
 But I saw no sail and I heard no shrouds.

To a promontory of Tierra del Fuego  
 I climbed at noon and stretched my hand  
 Toward another country, remoter and bleaker.

This is as haunting and memorable as "So ghostly then the girl came in"; but here the descriptive power is strengthened, the sense of mystery is wilder. The technical skill is instinctive as well as tutored, for there was (I have been told) a fourth line in the original manuscript of that final stanza. With "hand" he ties-back his rhyme to the first stanza and then with the irregular breaking-off of the verse form gives his poem the drama of the unexpected and in the same flash justifies it. The deliberate flaw is a flawless stroke.

There can be no question that Robert Hillyer throughout his work is most importantly a lyric poet. But he has made some departures that should be noted. One of them, as a translator, can scarcely be called a departure. With S. Foster Damon, he did *A Book of Danish Verse*, 1922, and a year later Hillyer published his "metrical arrangements from the Egyptian Book of the Dead," *The Coming Forth By Day*. The Egyptian poems probably constitute one of his important contributions: their hortatory eloquence has great speed and virility. (They comprise, incidentally, the entire Egyptian section of Mark Van Doren's famed *Anthology of World Poetry*.)

The first of his two novels, *Riverhead*, is very much a poet's novel, a youthful mixture of incompatible intentions. It tells of Paul Sharon's river voyage to find Mr. Fiat—that is, God. The search is for values, meaning, maturity. Had Hillyer done it as a half-dream-like long poem, like the later *Death of Captain Nemo*, he

would have better realized his themes. But he wrote his symbols first, so to speak, and the projected realism of the novel, its attempted tone of realism, is constantly embarrassed by the poetic symbolism. So the story becomes a kind of charade. The prose, as such, is good; Hillyer always writes a good prose. *My Heart for Hostage*, the second novel, is less ambitious and much better. It links with *Riverhead* in that it too shows its hero in the process of maturing, but it does not overload its narrative. If Germaine, with whom the young American lieutenant has his affair, represents the puzzling and delightful characteristics of France itself, still that is not intrusive. We have an engaging story of differing personalities, a dream of young love rendered in recognizable human terms. The book has great charm and color in its variety of people and places.

Hillyer's departures from what I consider his richest talent are not, of course, contradictions. They are extensions and variations. Within the poetry itself the two most notable are book-length: *A Letter to Robert Frost and Others*, 1937, and *The Death of Captain Nemo*, 1949. The *Letter* book is just that, loquacious, ruminative, witty talk in rhymed couplets on life, death, war, literature, and whatnots. The couplets have the expected grace, and as a whole, though there are emotionally serious passages, the book belongs along the line of Hillyer's development of light verse (again: not an altogether adequate term. Let us say: his conversational rather than his rhetorical style, to employ the terms he uses in his Introduction to his edition of Donne and Blake.) The *Nemo*, a blank verse narrative of two sailors in at the submarine death of Jules Verne's fabulously ancient mariner, is marked by passages of weird descriptive power (see, for instance, the one on page 16 beginning "She taught me loveless love"), which accumulate that tone for the entire poem.

Fantasy and a touch of weirdness are to be found here and there throughout his work. They operate in two little plays published in the late 1920's, *The Engagement Ring* and *The Masquerade*: in the first, Death disguised as a beachcomber controls the action; in the second, some famous dead (Dr. Johnson, Catherine of Russia, etc.) mingle as supposed masqueraders at a contemporary party. This sense of mystery I have hinted at in quoting two poems

in full; I wish to display one more, "Visitants in a Country House at Night":

My ears are alert  
 For a sound thin as thought;  
 Fear strangles my heart,  
 And my nerves pull taut.

You are dead, you who loved.  
 ("And you, too, are dead.")  
 Who said that? Who moved?  
 I will not turn my head.

Here where I centered  
 My life from one world  
 Noiselessly entered  
 Another, and swirled

Like mist in the air  
 When the air stands still.  
*Creak* goes the stair,  
*Creak* goes the sill.

Is that you, Walter Darrel,  
 Who died in the War?  
 Is that you, almost visible  
 There by the door?

Is that you, Johnny Wilson,  
 Who drowned in the sea,  
 Drifting upward from fathoms  
 Of darkness to me?

Is that you, Martha Fennel,  
 Your step on the stair,  
 The gun in your right hand,  
 The blood in your hair?

Peace to you, Walter,  
 On the hill at Verdun;  
 Drift back with the tide

Of forgetfulness, John.

Peace to you, Martha,  
The bullet that tore  
Through your brain was avenged  
When he died in the War.

And your lover is dead,  
He was drowned in the sea.  
And I, too, am dead,—  
All you once knew of me.

We were children, we ranged  
Half in cloud, half in sun;  
But now I am changed,  
And you must be gone.

("Peace to *you*, Robert."  
Who said that?

O deep  
In the night, through the night,  
Let me sleep.

The thing unspoken or half spoken, the thing beyond saying, the sense of mystery. I think his finest lyrics are all marked by this. The three quoted show a progression, from a kind of Connecticut twilight romance, through the harsh strangeness of the non-human *Tierra del Fuego*, to the dramatic spine-chill of the "Visitants." The reader who does not know these poems can have no conception of Hillyer's quality. The reader who knows them does not forget them. Is there a better test?

And there are other poems. Neither Mr. Hillyer nor his admirers will assume that my brief essay can posture as the definitive one. I have necessarily skimped much, tossed blame without thorough analysis, and praised without citing many things I should have liked to. Any poet, and perhaps especially any lyric poet, requires a sifting-out as attentive as the lifelong devotion he has brought to his work. At best I have hoped to suggest where Hillyer's most durable notes are to be found.

# From Gargantua to the Yahoo<sup>1</sup>

WALDO FRANK

THE WORLD of François Rabelais, physician and ex-monk of the 16th century France, belongs to huge and ravenous men. Grangousier, Gargantua (to whom Gargamelle gives birth after eleven months' labor and a too bountiful feast of tripe, through her left ear) and Pantagruel are giants in more than body, and their vast animal spirits are shared by Panurge, and Friar John whose stature is more normal. Rabelais's world reeks, like a stable, of manure but the windows are wide and sunny airs of spring blow gaily through them. Dante's world was of souls, and even the damned were within a synthesis of knowledge that gave meaning to their torture which was their sin's endless presence. Now, two centuries later, the world is an epiphany of bodies, and the bodies' lusts and laughter are strong enough to shake the towers of Notre Dame. The institutions of Christian Europe have become dung-hills, but the decay is compost—and sweet. Even the Rabelaisian excrement is not foul . . . is like an infant's, fed on mother's milk, or a grass-grazing beast's. For the souls of these bodies are earth; they have found their kingdom of God in the enjoyments of earth. Nor are these giants louts; they have the intelligence of Europe, not now aimed at building philosophic and theocratic structures but at blasting them away—with laughter. Rabelais's world is a dawn with an unsqueamish sun flushing the frauds of Christian Europe; but the flood destroys only the dead for it is joyous and warm. The Word according to Saint Rabelais: "The individual is born, huge as the God Who loves him and creates the good earth for him."

Why is Rabelais the archetype for this new age? Why not another book of giants (there are many, even about Pantagruel) or of normal-size men, pious, gloomy, earnest, sentimental? Rabe-

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from chapter III of Waldo Frank's forthcoming book, *The Rediscovery of Man: a memoir and a methodology of modern life*, to be published this fall by George Braziller.

lais's book is *the best writing*; authenticity of contents cannot be divorced from quality of texture, nor depth of texture from depth of meaning. The style is indeed the man—and the age. Because Dante's genius, at levels below his consciousness, was cognate with the organism of his people, he wrote as he did. And when we speak of the luminous containment of his verse we refer to the integration of its content within the spirit of his people. (Compare an analogous inspiration in Walt Whitman or Hart Crane). Rabelais's prose is rough and open country, virgin and fertile, yet no jungle. Despite its rankness and seeming chaos it is subdued to man's joy; a divine grace is in it, molding its monstrous depths to harmony assimilable for human sense. In relation to its content it is as adequate as Dante's prosody to his.

Shakespeare, a century later, is kin to Rabelais, more kin than is generally understood. The turn of the 17th century in England is close to 16th century France, her enemy and sister; and the word of England's poet is distilled from the same opulent earth in which France's greatest prose fermented. The differences are strong, of course, but they rise from common ground. France of the 16th century was already strong enough to hold its parts together; the towns were not, as in Italy, anarchic; the counter-Reform of the Church was not too rigid, the monarchs were not alien and the barons were subdued. Symbol of this unity was *the open country*, and this is the Rabelaisian texture. (True, the University of Paris and the agents of the Pope condemned *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, but the books got written and published and read.) In all this, England followed close upon France. In Rabelais, the knowledge that created Christian Europe is still sufficiently instinctive and organic to do without faith—even to mock it. (His book might be called a carnalized Gothic church.) In Shakespeare, the knowledge is gone, and the faith too. To compensate, there is fealty to the already obsolescent social order of old Europe. But there are no Christians in Shakespeare's plays, there is no Presence. Rabelais's satire against the corrupt body of the Christian Republic (its Lords, monks and learned doctors) is based on Christian values. Shakespeare, remote from their spirit, cannot satirize the institutions.

When his heart speaks, it is more in the classic mood of Stoic, Hedonist, Pyrrhonist, or in the modern romantic temper of anxiety and lostness. But the verdure of Shakespeare is neither classic nor modern; like that of Rabelais, it is the lilt and bloom of man's long gestation during the Christian age when he grew greatly bold because he knew that God was in him.

This quality of dawn is immediate in Shakespeare's women. They may speak as medieval ladies, but their resilient sweet flesh makes them true primitives. Because of them, the comedies are better than the tragedies. They are bathed in a morning air, sunny yet sharp, which transfigures their nonsense into music. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reveals already the full poet. "What fools these mortals be!" is Shakespeare's judgment, but it is Puck who speaks it: the pristine spirit of play; and this, far more than the dry misanthrope *Timon*, is Shakespeare. The ridiculous antics to which Bottom and his fellow mortals are subjected to show what fools they are, reveals the one philosophy of Shakespeare: "Juggle, skip, leap, and—with tongue in cheek—weep. While you are at it, you are the master of life, which is worth a song. So sing!" The plays of Shakespeare are flimsy structures made of planks borrowed no matter where. For not the plays: *the play*, as pelt and ricochet of lyric emotion, is the thing. The dramas, as integral actions strictly combined from the inevitable conflict of the characters, hardly hold together. The individual scenes, and above all the individuals, are loose in their own drama-world; an exterior, often arbitrary plot puts them through their paces. Why then are they wonderfully real? The language they speak, distillate of a millennium of the Presence, flows in them like blood.

Of course, the plays as theater have their sequential logic: Shakespeare knows how to keep the ball of interest flying from hand to hand on the stage. But as organisms, most of his dramas are factitious. The *dramatis personae* are monads bounding and bouncing against each other by the pre-established harmony of their author. But this showman's voice speaks the wisdom and laughter of a millennial Europe. Like a great stream gushing from the heart of a mountain, it fills each character, bestowing substance of flesh, the leap of will. A single scene, at times a single speech, is more

vital than the play whose careless plot was borrowed. Yet when Lady Macbeth, Lear, Falstaff, Hamlet, Iago, Rosalind, Miranda, are speaking, we hear the voice of an already decomposing world.

The harvest of *individuals* in the first flush of their life, before life reveals them to themselves as illusion: in Rabelais it is rank and fresh under a noon sun; in Shakespeare the doubts enshadow it. In the great book of Cervantes, who died the year that Shakespeare died, the shadows are solid, taking the form of a deep ethical anguish. Spain and *Don Quixote* are inconceivable without each other. As we have seen, Spain belatedly becomes a power and part of Europe. It has expelled the Arab and the Jew, but nothing can expunge the Semite from its spirit. With a passion for establishing God on earth, a passion that is Jewish in its integral social sense and Arabic in its reliance on the sword, Spain has crusaded to "politicalize" the Presence,—and not only in Europe where its institutions are already dissolving. Abroad, the heroic effort has broken against the lusts of the conquistadores; at home it has bogged down. The successors of the great kings of Spain are epigones, and the true king of Europe, uncrowned, yet unknown, is Descartes. This is the scene in 1600, when *Don Quixote*, the knight of the sorrowful countenance, starts on his adventure to enact social justice. His impulse is the Christian's to become a person (for the social must be integrated with the cosmic). But all the Knight has for the purpose is an old nag and an archaic sword. The damsels whose distress he would serve are harlots; the lords of the castle who entertain him are taverners that want their pay; and the evil giants he challenges are windmills. This is Cervantes' way of exposing the obsolete world his hero strives to work in. It is all a joke. But by the genius of Spain, the laughter against *Don Quixote* becomes the universal laughter against Christ; the presence of the ridiculous knight becomes the perpetual reminder of the Presence of God.

There is still wholeness in the worlds of these three masters, manifest by the complex plasm of their language and their triumphant joy in life. But the cosmic dimension is revealed obliquely: in Rabelais, it is a charge of air and earth, bursting the forms of

Europe and of "mean sensual man," making him a giant of tenderness and laughter; in Shakespeare, it is the parabola of his men and women, making them jet beyond the bounds of their own drama; in Cervantes (whose characters also are larger than life) it is the victory of a myth of love and social justice over the reality of Spain—a myth the reality laughs at, which, wonderfully, moves the reader to know the myth more real than the real. Yet despite their immense vitality these worlds are less completely human than Dante's, in which the cosmic dimension is explicit.

Cervantes was able to introduce Christ . . . the presence of the Cosmic . . . into his terrestrial world, only by letting the world jeer at him. This irony is a lesion, and after Cervantes European literature is split and becomes schizoid. The bifurcation is represented (1) by the writers who create a vision of the cosmic with a weak grasp of the concrete particulars which express it, and (2) by the masters whose universe has shrunken to the empirical-particular. In the first branch, among the most exalted, are such great poets as Calderón, Milton, Racine; in the second, Lope de Vega, Montaigne, Molière. . . .

Milton's theme, set forth in three great works, is man's creation, undoing and rescue by God. But the testimony of Milton's performance is always man's remoteness from self and from God. In *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, a music of huge brass wind instruments (all the strings missing) does not succeed in bringing the Presence near . . . not in the cosmic battles, not in the intimate moments of the flesh . . . not as near as it is even in the Hell of Dante. Only Satan breathes in Milton's work; remoteness and a will dissident from the Presence. Indeed, Milton's Satan is as modern as Hamlet. The Prince of Denmark dramatizes in yearning, meditative, sentimental aspect, the European's loss of the knowledge of God; he is the father of all the impotent romantic heroes; Milton's great fallen Prince dramatizes the same loss in its aspect of sadistic power: he is the sire of the Byronic Corsairs, the flamboyant rebels. There is, it seems, a conflict in Milton between his reach and his grasp. Shakespeare, despite the confusions of both his purpose and his themes, creates characters

with the dynamic force of Kepler's planets—as do Cervantes and his great forebear Fernando de Rojas in *La Celestina*, and Rabelais before them. Milton, whose aim is to portray the presence of God's will in the experience of men and women—as Kepler places the sun in the planet's orbits—reveals his own will only and the human alienation from God's knowledge.

Perhaps his surest word is *Samson Agonistes* (1671), the work of his old age. It is the tragedy of potent Renaissance man, blinded and finally, in his frustrate rage, destructive.

O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
Irrevocably dark, total eclipse  
Without all hope of day.

Milton's identification with the stricken giant goes deeper than the fact of his blindness, and reaches frighteningly farther. Samson, betrayed by his lusts (Delila), loses his sight, is enslaved by the frivolous world which tempted him, regains his power and destroys both himself and the world. No man of our atomic age should read the tragedy without trembling. Milton was a prophetic poet. He paints a cosmos with only fallen persons in it.

A few years after Milton, another tragic poet of genius speaks. Under Louis XIV, France approaches the empirical order of Descartes. The philosopher has said: "Je pense, donc je suis." The "sun-monarch" says: "L'état, c'est moi." France generalizes: "L'état, c'est le moi": "the true state is the ego." But before the explosive and tragic implications of this law become visible as they are today, the Tuilleries, the Louvre, the Palace and gardens of Versailles express an intellectual *salon* where every *thing* has its place—and what else is there? God and man's soul: for the placing of these within the Cartesian coordinates, metaphysics and faith have not sufficed; and as the mathematico-political world becomes more exquisitely ordered, these (whose energy is love) stifle and grow sick. Racine's tragedies prophecy this sickness. Supremely ordered, they articulate disorder.

*Quelle funeste poison  
L'amour a répandu sur toute la maison! (Phèdre)*

In *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, the world of Grace was distant; in *Phèdre* (three years after Milton's death), the world without Grace is very present. The language of the poet is cut and assembled with the precision of the stones of the Louvre, yet fluid as the blood in which the Hebrews placed the soul. In all Racine's typical plays, the positive force of the action is incarnate in women. *Phèdre* is the archetype. The Queen and Oenone, her Machiavellian "minister of state," act upon the men who are helpless beneath them. (In the original play by Euripides, it is the women who are passive.) The incestuous passion and the schemes of the two women are anarchic, dissolving and burning away the values of civilization, both ethical and political, which the men represent: Hypolite's noble piety and innocence, the enlightened egoism of Theseus, his father. The women forecast, in their increasing rôle, the anarchic course of individualism whose ultimate stage, in a few generations, will be dramatized by Ibsen and Strindberg. These Racinian aristocrats, offspring of Greek gods, speak like persons, but are not persons. They introduce in the correctly columned Pelopponesian city, an insane, modern chaos.

The equally luminous but more lithic prose of Blaise Pascal is the antistrophe of Racine's verse. Both men were Jansenists: Protestants in feeling; but Pascal, a mathematician, knew the essential hopelessness of the Cartesian world in which Racine merely suffered. The aesthetic greatness of Racine comes from the anguish of his acceptance of the Cartesian forms. Call them reason. Pascal then, having mastered the content of these forms, rejects them desperately for un-reason. If Racine prophesies Dostoievski, Pascal announces Kierkegaard. He hates the order of the world; hates even the Jesuits who would stamp and save it with a formula for the Christian Presence. He rejects the social dimension of the person (whose acceptance made it possible for Racine to write organic drama); rejects therefore the possibility of persons. His soul is a monad of force, falling through Democritian chaos, and redeemed from it only by the direct knowledge of his ignorance of God. And his lapidic notes reflect this knowledge in a solitude infinitely fiercer than that of the early Christian hermits to whom the City of God

was more real than the grim, barren *Natura* of mathematics. (Pascal's *Pensées* were notations for a modern *Summa*, but even if he had lived more years he could not have composed it). No poet of the succeeding centuries, not even Baudelaire, expressed better than Racine the anguish inherent in the structure of the modern Western world, from which the Presence has gone. And no prose more succinctly than Pascal's has stated the anxiety of the *individual will* which is the architect of that structure: builder of our nations, our economy, our maimed sciences and our machines—all branches without the bole.

The experience of these two 17th century Frenchmen has become common since their time. Is it chance that the definitive expressions of a universal mood of the West should have come so early, and from them? Both Pascal and Racine, despite their essential Protestantism, remained within the Church which holds the tradition of European knowledge. And they were both of the nation which, preserving the elements of the old synthesis and yet receiving the forces of its dissolution, best achieved in its State and its culture a balance between them. An ingredient of genius is always its particular social condition, the *status quo*, in which it works. This perhaps explains the cultural primacy of France in the centuries when the creative task of literature was to destroy old structures, while salvaging values from them for the Reconstruction.

In our swift analysis, Milton, Racine and Pascal have stood for the religious branch of the bifurcation of the synthesis of Europe. Montaigne, the first modern essayist, and Molière, the first master of social comedy, may represent the empirical branch.

The life of Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) aptly separates Rabelais from Descartes. His father was a bourgeois of Bordeaux, rich enough to buy the château de Montaigne; his mother was the child of Spanish Jews; and Montaigne, with his inherited fortune made in commerce, belonged to a rising class, non-feudal in origin and anti-feudal in its values. There is no revelation in Montaigne's world. The common obviousness of his philosophy (he was Mayor of Bordeaux) makes him, indeed, the ancestor of Flaubert's Monsieur Homais, the platitudinous apothecary who provides a Job's

chorus for Emma Bovary's disaster. The meditations of 12th century monks (the Carthusian Guigo's, for example) were more striking and more profound. Why, then, the enduring fame of Montaigne's Essays? His Foreword answers. Their chatty pages tell us: "C'est moy que je peinds: it is *me* I paint." He keeps his promise. The confessions, meditations and reflexions of all Christendom from St. Augustine to St. Bernard and from the ecstatic Mechthild of Magdenburg to the ecstatically sober St. Teresa of Avila, revealed *selves* whose intimate details of feeling (far more intimate than Montaigne's) partake immediately of the universal. The cosmic in them is the dominant dimension, transfiguring the individual into an aspect of the person. But Montaigne is always the individual; even when he quotes Scripture (rarely) or (more usual) the poets and historians of ancient Greece and Rome, he refers them to his ego and assumes the reader to be an ego like himself. This was something new in the world of letters still ruled by a profound tradition! Montaigne's views seldom go deeper than shrewd urbanity. Unless he accompanied them with a bottle of his best Bordeaux vintage, one suspects that after an hour or two his conversation palled. But his writings convey a treasure: the sense of the individual as heir to the largesse of the Christian world, before it is squandered and gone. Rabelais extravagantly scattered it, Descartes piously devoted it to empirical research (wearing the forms of Christian Faith as he wore his fine linen ruff). Montaigne's mild tincture of Epicureanism and Stoicism reveals the well-being of the richly nurtured ego before the death of knowledge has begun to bring disaster.

Montaigne's prose, firm as crisp-roasted capon, is nearer poetry than is Molière's verse. The rhymed alexandrines of those celebrated comedies: *Le Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*, *Les Femmes Savantes*, mislead if intoned in rhythms, as one reads the verse of Racine; on the contrary, they must yield to the logic of the syntax which submerges rhymes and metric beat. The verse form stands for tradition, it is erased by the phrasing of each sentence. And this expounds Molière's first lesson: he reveals a view of man dissident from traditional and courtly definitions. But it is impossible to understand

Molière by merely reading him. His plays must be seen on the stage, as in our time great directors (Jacques Copeau, Louis Jouvet, Charles Dullin) have produced him; with his trivial actions and insipid characters drenched in crass Rabelaisian slapstick. What, judged wholly by the text, is the value of *Le Misanthrope*? Alceste should be called egotist, and a childish one. How deep his misanthropy? A prick on the surface of manners. To call this play in the style of the professors "a criticism of life," is to reduce the book of life to a magazine of modistes' models. The rebellion of Alceste is a spoiled boy's tantrum, threatening to burn the house down because Mama refuses a fourth lolypop. And the sole touch with reality in Célimène, Alceste's lover, comes from her teasing and maternal rebukes of the boy's nonsense. What is important in *Tartuffe*? Surely not the revelation that there are hypocrites and exploiters in the Church, which no medieval chronicle ignored. And in *L'Avare*? The conventional farce-treatment of avarice, old as Terence and Menander? Or in *Les Précieuses Ridicules*? The staggering truth that hidden beneath their trivia, the learned snobs have female organs? There are of course no persons in Molière's plays, but there are *not* individuals—and this negation is the clue to Molière's positive greatness.

His plays' actions, by lending themselves to farce extravagant in movement and in costume, bring out through the contrast of their ebullient animal spirits the brittleness, the drabness, the absurdity, the *void* of human existence in this great 17th century Paris. Harpagon, Madelon and Cathos, M. Jourdain (the bourgeois gentleman who is thrilled and proud to learn that he speaks prose), the hyperbolically ignorant doctors, the cuckolds and the Scapins, represent an appalling shrinkage of human substance: dry, thin meat indeed! but served in rich Rabelaisian sauces—all the wild laughing juice of medieval Europe—that make the meat palatable, while not concealing the poverty of the substance. Two centuries later, in England, another comedic genius will modulate the method of Molière. The characters of *Pickwick Papers* (the masterpiece of Dickens, who lacked the intellectual equipment and also, perhaps, the cultural milieu of a great novelist) are neither persons nor individuals; they are poetmatic figures and types of human foibles

endowed with glorious life by the residual May-time energies of Elizabethan England still sunning in the fields, the inns, the ale and the huge dinners of Victoria's age. This archaic energy of the English folk, despite the hideous new factory towns, is in the pages of Dickens—along with ever more Drury Lane hokum as the author grows more pretentious. Molière is the purer comic, perhaps; but since his work depends on the physical bounce of his actors, this is less visible to readers.

Not the story of *Travels into several Remote Nations of the World . . . by Lemuel Gulliver*, and not its psychological revelation of Swift, yield directly the book's importance; but they are the readiest approach to it. From the start, the narrative's blend of fantasy and intimate matter-of-fact announces that Gulliver is Jonathan Swift and Swift the hero of Gulliver's adventures. In Lilliput, the first visited nation, Gulliver-Swift is a giant whose size with plastic eloquence offsets the almost invisibly small but pullating mean-ness of man and the absurdities and corruptions of courts. Who is the compositor of this device? A solitary ego glorified by what it beholds and suffers. When the royal palace burns, Gulliver-Swift saves it with his urine. The scene is borrowed from *Gargantua*, in which Rabelais' giant unloads his bladder on Paris, drowning a specified number of Parisians. There, the extravagance is an act of infantile animal spirits; Swift makes it a sour aggression of contempt by greatness upon smallness; and this is confirmed by the resentment of the Lilliputian court which decrees that the perpetrator be blinded. The implications are complex and clear: Gulliver-Swift's superiority, in serving, offends; and the reward must be a penalty like Samson's. In Brobdingnag, the second kingdom, the theme of human diminutiveness is turned about: Gulliver-Swift now represents the human race dwarfed, in the perspective of the Brobdingnaggians, to the worthlessness of insects. At the same time, by an economy of symbols like the dreams, the giants themselves are the humans, in order that Swift's isolating eye may see the enormity of their repulsive features; the blotched skin, the bloated breasts, the filth and lice and cancers of the poor, the monstrous details of a criminal's execution, become the "truth" of men

and women and the pretext for disgust in the hero. The method of Lilliput is reversed, but Swift has again withdrawn his ego for an assault on man, this time not man's pettiness but his grossness. Yet the Brobdingnaggians—and in this they are not human—have the dignity of size; the King and the royal family accept Gulliver-Swift, they even learn to love him. By sleight of mind, he is again the hero, basking in the favor of his greatness over the rest of mankind, turned Lilliputian.

Part Three, which recounts the voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib . . . lacks the miraculous verisimilitude which Swift's dream-dynamics gave to Lilliput and Brobdingnag; it is more kin to the conventional satire of the age and is at best a gloss to Parts One and Two and the threshold to Part Four. In the country of the Houyhnhnms, at last the weary traveler is home! But before he is condescendingly received by the gentle, rational, sweet-smelling horses who are his heart's desire, Gulliver-Swift encounters the human Yahoos, who foul him with their excrement. Ordure by now has become the explicit symbol of the lone ego's response to mankind. The Yahoos, unlike the horses, are subject to disease, named "Yahoo evil," and the cure prescribed is a mixture of their own dung and urine forced down the Yahoo's throat. "This . . . I do freely recommend to my own countrymen for the public good, as an admirable specific against all disease produced by repletion." Gulliver-Swift picks up a cub of the Yahoos: "While I held the odious vermin in my hands, it voided its filthy excrement of a yellow liquid substance all over my clothes."

The Yahoos, more vile and incorrigible than other beasts, are men, and of use to the Houyhnhnms chiefly for their skins which may be tanned, and for their coarse hair which is woven into textiles. They are distinct from the Yahoos of Europe chiefly in that the latter possess just enough reason to organize and to extend their beastliness. Gulliver-Swift is also a Yahoo, but of so exceptional a mildness that his horse master admits him to the family conversation. This brings the too tolerant Houyhnhnm trouble, and after five years of bliss Gulliver-Swift has to leave. Reconciliation to Yahoo-kind in England is a slow, painful process. For years, Gulliver cannot bear the smell of even his own wife. "And when

I began to consider that by copulating with one of the Yahoo species I had become a parent of more, it struck me with the utmost shame, confusion and horror." Gulliver has found rudiments of pride among even the most obscene of the Yahoos. "But the Houyhnhnms, who live under the government of reason, are no more proud of the good qualities they possess, than I should be for not wanting a leg or an arm, which no man in his wits would boast of, although he must be miserable without them. I dwell the longer upon this subject from the desire to make the society of an English Yahoo by any means not insupportable, and therefore I here entreat those who have any tincture of this absurd vice, that they will not presume to come into my sight." Thus closes the book of the proudest *individual* in Europe.

The literary roots of *Gulliver's Travels* are known. Lucian and Rabelais made contribution; even more, Cyrano de Bergerac's *Histoire Comique des Etats et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*. And Swift knew Bergerac's precursors: Denys Vairasse d'Alais, author of *Histoire des Sevarambes* (1677-79), Gabriel Foligny, and Godwin's *Voyage of Domingo Gonzales to the World of the Moon*. William Dampier's popular *Voyages* held Swift down to earth, modelled his style and method. Moreover, the year before Swift began his book, *Robinson Crusoe* appeared, and Gulliver's mechanical ingenuity must have owed much to DeFoe's classic extrovert individual. If one considers all Swift's sources and the use he made of them, one might conclude that the *Travels* is the work of a madman. The book's pervasive *autism* (to use the term of Gardner Murphy), its obsession with excrement (according to Freud first source of pride and power in the infant), the variated mirrors Swift contrives to reflect his immensity in Lilliput, among the Brobding-naggians and Yahoo, his freedom from man's grossness, his continuous modulation back and forth between sadism and masochism in his identity with or abscission from what disgusts him . . . all this brings to mind the shrewd makeshifts and solipsisms of psychopathic art.

The book's misanthropy has no overt link with philosophy or religion. Neo-Platonist, Buddhist, Christian mystic, withdraw from the empirical dimensions of the self in order to cultivate the cosmic

within them, which they love; in Swift, the cosmic is not loved and does not exist. Nor is the book (except in the inferior Part III which, alone, would have won small fame) essentially satire, which is exposure of falsehood, violence, hypocrisy and greed *within* the matrix of the positive values whose absence these words point to. The book's basic revelation is of a human being without the Being which gives value, without the Presence which makes absence pain. The author sees life's substance as a narcissist whose eroticism has been traumatized and fixated on the level of excrement and rage (even as a harelip is a fixated embryological feature of what becomes the human mouth). By the absolute separation of the ego from the human world and by the absence of universals from the ego, the book denies the human essence. And this is a state common to schizophrenia. The psychotic, cut off from society and cosmos, turns himself into Man—or into God. He is the absolute individual. If he has talent, he may produce art. Why not call *Gulliver's Travels* the product of an extraordinary madman?

The answer is in the writing. The language of *Gulliver's Travels* is the greatest modern English prose. The words, precisely adequate for the story, move with organic rhythm. Each voyage begins like a mariner's log, and flows into the fantasy of self-love and hate variously mirrored, yet the style remains poised, muscular, serene. English is the voice of a race endowed with every nerve and depth of man's experience; and here is a book that expresses the genius of that language. In the work of a psychopath however gifted, this could not be; some dissonance would show from the spirit of the people by whose measure the man was insane—whereas this prose breathes full-blooded concord! Here, moreover, is a book whose episodes are patched together from vast readings. In the work of a madman, the syncretism would speak; we would not find trans-substantiation of materials into a fresh living whole as controlled and complete as Racine's alchemy from Euripides and Seneca or as Shakespeare's from the cruder Elizabethans. The perfect prose and form of Swift's book can mean only that the mind which composed the story was harmonious with, expressive of, the people whose language Swift shared. And this can mean only that the "madness" of Swift's desperate individualism *was not individual*

madness (since he is deeply linked with his people); that his revelation of men without trace of the cosmic Presence was a prophetic record of the state of the people whose language he exalted.

Swift was a proud and frustrated politician who had seen his inferiors reach the prizes for which he lusted; a bitter priest who had lost all sense of the divine in man. This cannot explain the greatness of his work, as exile cannot explain Dante, as prison and humiliation cannot explain Cervantes. Genius is the capacity to associate from the known to the unknown and to integrate from them a new form of Knowledge. The world Swift revealed (although he hated his contemporary, Newton) was the Cartesian age—but without the arbitrary God that Descartes and Newton grafted upon it. Leave out the God as alien to the Cartesian substance, and you have Swift's world reflected by Lilliput and Brobdingnag. Leave out the God as alien to the substance of self, and you have the individual as Gulliver-Swift felt himself to be; you have the Yahoo, as each ego feels the aggregate of other egos to be.

God, of course, in Swift's age is still preached in the churches, still believed in by the humble, still bowed to by the mighty. Yet the cogent word of the desperate Swift (or of the sniggering Sterne) speaks the truth. The individual shall be supreme, through science and trade mastering the world. Genius tells more than it knows! Swift too writes his *Commedia*. Like Dante's, it has Hell—but with no souls aware that their suffering is absence of the Presence; and Paradise—but with the community of Saints replaced by horses. Like Rabelais's book, it contains giants,—but without the sweetness and joy and *largesse* of Nature. Like Cervantes's it hates injustice, but without love and without hope. It introduces the herded individuals of Europe, and gives them a name: Yahoo.

## Seeds for the Next Spring

*From the Notebooks*

WALDO FRANK

A MAN looked north; hell was there. He looked south; hell was before him. He turned east and found hell; west, and hell was at his eyes. Standing still, hell was about him. "Whither?" he asked, looking down, and hell was beneath him. He decided to look up; hell was over his head. "I shall stand still"; unmoving, he found hell within him. "I'll face it." This was the beginning of his survival.

—I perceive the world. This perception is within me. I am within this perceived world, hence part of the perceived. But as I envisage this perception I sense beauty or love. This means union of a dyad. The I that perceives the union cannot be the I that is part of the perceived. This I which transcends the perceived (phenomenal world), joining it with the perceiver in the experience of beauty or love, is the cosmic within the self.

—Practice consciousness of this ultimate self, in daily life: routine and crisis. Gradually, it becomes a presence. It is at once detachment from the perceived (including the perceived I) and enters into it as an aware proportion, perspective, value. It makes the perceived a magnetized field of which it is the magnetic principle. As it works on the phenomena of the field, it and they become image.

—God is in this self. Since I cannot understand, let me know.

—It seems to have been characteristic of men living in empires to seek to become "enlightened animals," *i.e.* to live within a necessity that obviates the search for freedom. Greek and Roman Stoic-

ism, the anti-metaphysical Confucianism of China, the Positivism and Pragmatism of the modern West, the Marxism of Russia and now China, are examples. They all make necessity external to the self, and forbid consciousness to seek to share . . . to do other than accept it. Possibly, the reason why such schools of thought flourish in collectives of great power is that the strong nation seems to subdue the anxieties of the ego, merging it in the group. But of course this is delusion. The ego anxieties always return: reactions from Stoicism, etc., set in through the mystical cults in which the self again seeks freedom by identification with the necessity of God within it.

—God is the metaphor of a concatenation of experiences analogous to (not identical with) the concatenation of optic and memory experiences. For example, when we see a bird in flight we do not *see* the bird; we see a small group of material movements, we remember others, and we infer the bird. Normally our inference will be right; the bird is there. By analogous inference, from empirical perceptions formed with memory in the mind, we rightly infer God. This particular class of perception we call revelation. Strictly, any awareness of noumenon in phenomenon is revelation.

—Pindar was not the first to note that finally wisdom always yields to self-interest. Man's selfhood is ineradicable, if man is to be. The problem is not to exhort or destroy self but to transform it. The self that has been nurtured to know that God is in it will enact wisdom by self-interest . . . spontaneously, as the scorched body shrinks from fire, the hungry body draws toward food.

—Ego knows no relation except conquest of submission. Yet from it alone God is revealed: from its anxiety and agony of frustration, from its need to be whole and from its failing. For the possible limit of conquest and surrender is always reached; the limit of lust for them, never.

—Nirvana is a spiritual form of entropy. Being dwindle to an abstract noun without verb . . . without act of existence. The

Christian Kingdom of God is transfiguration through mastery, not abolition, of the ego. Being becomes verb; God becomes noun of existence.

—God is within the self: this is the mystery of Being. God within self revealing God within another self establishes my relation with the other; my conduct toward the world. This must become instinctual, spontaneous—or in every stress of crisis it will not be at all.

—God within the self reveals the not-God within the self. This vast and complex region is characterized by the negation of the common ground . . . God . . . of self and selves. But the negation is like the reverse of a mirror's reflection. It is polarity, not dualism. Yet this "other" region, the not-God of self, feels itself separate and is anxious against separateness. It is the false principle of individuation. The Brikadaranyaka Upanishad says: "Fear comes when there is another." Fear is distinct from anxiety, as "the other" is distinct from "otherness." The not-God in the self is also the limen through which the self must pass to positive knowledge of unitary cosmos. Why or how this not-God is in us is the mystery of existence.

—"Original sin," a doctrine which has its equivalent in the East, is the natural egoism of the ego. Of course, it must *be*, before it may be transfigured by the cosmic energy of the self. This is "grace," and all we know of God's mystery. Related to "original sin," is the horror which the condition of man inspires in the sensitive. Fear (and terror, its extreme) is objective. A cyclone, any physical and immediate threat of death will cause it; animals, to the extent of their awareness, share it. Not horror. For horror has a subjective element. One who feels horror, however vaguely, feels his own part in the threat; that he as a self is involved in it. Horror unlike terror implies responsibility, which may indeed be felt only as horror. The world may be fearful; the light of God within the self brings the cause of the fear "home," and fills it with horror. Thus horror is related not only to "original sin," but to freedom.

If freedom could be given *a priori*, it would be necessity. Since man must achieve it, and does not, his world has horror.<sup>1</sup> The true atheist (if he exists)—a man in whom the dimension of God is effectively effaced, loses his sense of horror. Thus perhaps was the fate of the qualmless Nazis who ruled Buchenwald and Dachau. They had lost the sense of horror. But it can always return. God may lose in the flower of the self, never in the roots.

—Part of each man's image, moving him to thought and act, is his sense of *time*. In cultures dominated by the group dimension, non-aggressive, stably balanced, time tends to stand still at NOW. Time loses its poignance and importance, since only the individual dies in time and the all-valued group goes on. When time is contemplated, it dissolves into the timeless eternal, with past and future depleted of finality, as in the myth of Eternal Recurrence whose psychological effect is to make all times (since they recur) parts of NOW.

In our common Western world of selves dominated by the ego and collective ego, time becomes an image of the ego. The ego-will pushes up from a superseded past to an unrealized future. The ego's present is an instantaneous frontier from past to future. "Now" shrinks. Our image of time is of a rushing, irreversible stream, a "carrier" of ego in terms of which alone past and future have value.

With the cultivation of the cosmic energy in the self, at the point where it begins to count in consciousness, a strange transformation comes to the sense of time. *Time's source appears to be the future*, whence it flows into present and past. But "flow" is the wrong word. More accurately, the future becomes the source of time in the sense of matrix, foundation and vessel, with the present the structural meridian and the past as culmination. Memory now becomes consciousness (not perfect) of the past. Will with its reckonings, anxieties and reasons, becomes what awareness there may be (most imperfect) of the future. The future alone, in poten-

<sup>1</sup> Thus should be interpreted the great stories of Franz Kafka. The respectable young man in *The Metamorphosis* who wakes to find himself turned into a beetle is incarnating through horror his responsibility for what has happened to him. The theme is made explicit in *The Trial*.

tia, is perfect; and its realizations *into* the past are partial, and imperfect. But the future is always there to construct a more perfect past.

The present, now, in the common ego-conditioned sense of an instant that is ephemeral between infinite past and infinite future, utterly changes. The present is now the focus of a continuous structure containing both past and future, *with the future always changing the past*. The focus of the present is the self. And the self changes. The self it is that moves irreversibly toward the future; thereby balancing the structure of the time-continuum which is from future to past. The mystery of time does not vanish, of course. But our sense of it becomes an image of the cosmic, in which time *qua* human being is included. Whence, in the vicissitudes of life, a repose, a detachment, a perspective.

Doubtless, it was the clumsy intuition of this future as the perfect which the human Now constantly transforms into the imperfect past which underlay the Jewish-Christian notion of a Messianic Age.

—It is urgent to restrict ever anew to the *experienced* what is centered in the self. Not mankind but these loved or unloved ones; not earth but this spot of earth I am on; not space but this view of the sky.

—Thus, the experience of time and of the timeless may be constantly refreshed in the contemplation of art. Any intelligent adolescent enjoying a tune may be led to realize that the tune as a whole, to which each note in the time-sequence contributes, is itself not in time at all: that the transformation into the timeless and the immediate is what he enjoys. (Unless the tune be bad art and serve merely to titillate his senses.)

—Art, unlike science, is not additive. There is no “progress” in art. Science can accumulate data of perceptions to increase a constant sum of information. Or it can, by its growing experience of how to classify and control data, discard a previous principle in favor of a new one which covers more and works better. Art

in its existential nature offers the experience of the timeless and the spaceless; therefore, it is not built of a past. Artistic technics can build; fields of art-material can expand; psychological interpretations can deepen; but these are somatic provinces of science utilized by art. Each work of art, in its basic impulse, is alone and pristine. Temporally, art cannot advance.

The Paleolithic cave-painting of a bison hunt: the image of the beast to be aesthetically absorbed by men before they actually went forth to kill and to eat, *as art* is contemporary with the modern painter's. More precisely, the two paintings have no temporal relation at all. This is obviously not true of the works' scientific aspects: the knowledge of anatomy, the mixing of colors, technical skills in drawing, etc.

As art, the cave-man's picture is superior to an average modern realist's sketch, because of the deeper motive in it. The stone age man needed to establish a cosmic relation between the beast and his self. (Why he thought he needed this is irrelevant.) The modern sketcher wants merely to "tell about" the bison.

—The will must be shifted; and only the will can do it.

—Ruysbroeck is for me the most satisfactory of the Western mystics (after Augustine), because he rejects as false the loss of the person in God.

—It is significant that the most diverging schools (materialism, Marxism, Positivism) which agree in denying the cosmic dimension of the self or deny the self altogether (Hinayana Buddhism, transcendental Neo-Platonism) agree also in denying the unique value of the individual person. With the cosmic excluded, the self is seen as a composite of ego-somatic and group factors. These, being empirical phenomena, can be classified . . . *i.e.*, abstracted from uniqueness: in the East, nullified as *maya* and *avidya*. Only when the universal inheres in all the self's dimensions does the particular self contain the value of the universal—and this defines uniqueness. Only the self which knows its uniqueness because God is in it can experience the uniqueness of other selves—indeed of

all existential things. Thus, each leaf is unique as I experience it, but an atom is not unique as I merely conceptualize it. By analogy, only the self which recognizes the cosmic within it can partake of personal freedom. For only the cosmic whole is free of contingency—and the self only as it shares the whole. Hence the paradox: that only the self which knows God knows the possible loss of God. This, the Prophets understood, whence their continuous reminder to the Hebrews that they could sin and lose God. This, the Marxist determinist does not understand, whence his belief in the "salvation" of the Proletariat, without the possibility of ultimate failure. Without the "either-or" of Kierkegaard, individual man has no freedom, no intrinsic value.

—All has value, or nothing has value.

—Mine must be deepened; never transcended.

—What I see before my eyes; the dark trees, the new moon, the iridescent sky, and their beauty, is within myself. This does not mean of course that the noumenal trees, etc., are within me. Only the phenomenal form of the experience. In this sense, also, and only, God can be known. Man, as a phenomenal existence, is bound to phenomenal forms. He must accept this. God must be a phenomenal revelation (through beauty, love, conscience, anxiety) or God for man is *practically* nothing. This explains why the non-phenomenological thought of the classic theologies, both East and West, ended by negating God. God had evaporated by the very logic of (abstractly) proving his existence.

—Undifferentiated monism (pantheism) leads into trance: in the East, by a logic of theory; in the West by a logic of experience. The one remedy for undifferentiation is a phenomenology. But phenomenology cannot be limited to science. The feel of a pinprick is as phenomenologically real as the pin.

—*Antistrophe*: One might argue that to experience beauty (and love) in beholding some object of nature means not to

recognize unitary ground between my self and it, but merely my recognition that I construct what I behold in *my* categories of space and time; that therefore the beauty is the register of *self*-love, *self*-recognition. The rebuttal is this: despite the possibly subjective form of space-time in which my percepts clothe reality, it is present in me, not as mine but as outside, alien, indifferent or hostile to my ego. How then do I find it beautiful, although it slay me? how can the subjective in my experience outweigh its otherness, its alien-ness? Is not the ego wilful and anxious? If it rules in perceptual procedure, why do I feel beauty? The self that recognizes beauty and love is a self beyond the ego, for which the phenomenal world is predominantly hostile; is a self whose ego and group vectors are suffused (momentarily) by the cosmic.

—The practice, when it can be achieved, brings peace. Peace means *in-placeness*.

—Deceiving words:

- : individual . . superindividual
- : natural . . supernatural
- : finite . . infinite
- : action . . contemplation

—Shankaracharya's dictum: "Contemplation and action mutually bar each other, for action implies duality and contemplation implies unity" is wrong. Unity is both final cause and *the become*; duality is the process of becoming. Action is the becoming-one (dynamic or entropic) of disparate elements; contemplation is the beholding (before and after) of their union. Unlike the Vedantic techniques, our method strives to bring the two psychologically, as they are existentially, together: act in contemplation, contemplation in act.

—A physiology that described the bodily organs without consciousness of their relations with the organism's drives as *a whole* (for food, for propagation, for survival by adjustment to the environment, etc.) would not make sense. The current schools of

psychology commit just this nonsense. They struggle to deal with the brain (and its "effect"—the mind) as if these were an organ of strictly socio-physiological function for survival, for propagation, for adjustment. The *ontological* dimension of a sane physiology regards the function of each organ beyond its circumscribed behavior. Thus, the stomach creates nourishment not merely for the stomach but for the entire body; the sex organs propagate the whole life of the body; sight, smell, touch, etc., operate the entire organism's adjustment to its milieu. By analogy, the mind is a function of the whole organism's relation—not only with its ego and group elements—but with that whole of existence which the mind embraces or approaches.

—The infant's first responses to whatever stimulus, internal or external, are always a "mass-action." Its whole organism answers . . . wildly, vaguely, without the precision of intelligence. Similar are the first responses of the self to the stimuli of its cosmic dimension. The practicant must not for a long time hope to be better than an infant, in his mass-action rejoinders to God-is-in-this-self.

## The Achievement of Waldo Frank

JOHN R. WILLINGHAM

THE FASHIONABLE and the academic critics of American literature have generally passed Waldo Frank off as a minor, somewhat puzzling phenomenon. Of course, it is a truism that the most vital and significant artists of both England and America have had to await a suitable passage of time before their works could be understood and properly evaluated. Whitman, Thoreau, Melville, Emily Dickinson, Poe, and even Hawthorne, misunderstood or ignored by their contemporaries, had to be exhumed by militant young scholars and critics of the first world war period; and now that a thorough, objective sifting of the literary activity of the 1920s seems to be underway, doubtless Mr. Frank and his work are due for a considerable revival of interest. For revival it must be called in Frank's case. In the 1920s it seemed to many astute observers that there was not a more brilliant career in the making than Mr. Frank's. Both Sherwood Anderson and Hart Crane were almost pathetically humble about receiving attention and encouragement from the bold young man whose name was being bruited about in literary circles for his astonishingly brilliant and manifestly unique work in *Our America* and *City Block*. His genius was recognized early in France, Spain, and Latin America, where he is still considered one of the great American voices of the last thirty years. Perhaps older cultures are not so fickle; and it may be that the United States will finally have to learn about Frank, as it did about Whitman and Poe, from abroad. As Henri Peyre has succinctly noted: "Americans have had one successful traveling salesman of American culture, Waldo Frank, and they have treated him with great reserve."<sup>1</sup>

Out of the confusions of that uneasy period of search and rebellion which we have elected to call the "new American renais-

1. Henri Peyre, *The Contemporary French Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 265.

sance," that brilliant defiance of Victorianism and sometimes erratic struggle to achieve modernism between 1912 and 1920, the most promising single group of artists and critics spoke first through the pages of *The Seven Arts*. This little magazine, which flourished in 1916 and 1917, brought together a dedicated group of young men who believed that something positive needed to be done about the state of art and thought in America: Waldo Frank, James Oppenheim, Van Wyck Brooks, Paul Rosenfeld, Louis Untermeyer, and Randolph Bourne came together at various stages of the magazine's short, fitful, and ironically triumphant life. *The Seven Arts* did not, as did some other little magazines, directly or indirectly sound the note of expatriation; the editors declared in November, 1916: "It is the aim of *The Seven Arts* to become a channel for the flow of these new tendencies [i.e., national self-consciousness in art]: an expression of our American arts which shall be fundamentally an expression of our American life." Repeatedly, through manifesto-like essays and editorial statements, the group called for organic expression, and they thought that they saw the signs of America's literary coming-of-age in the fiction of Sherwood Anderson and the work of the "Chicago school." Frank, the most eloquently articulate member of the editorial band, granted that the United States perhaps could not expect striking greatness immediately: "Genius in America," he said in the November, 1916, issue, "if it does not altogether escape America, rises slowly. For it has far to come. The European is born on a plateau. America is still at sea-level. The blundering, blustering native was thirty-seven before he became Walt Whitman."

This early admonition suggests something of the tone of what Frank as a critic and an artist has been saying impressively ever since. There has been no sturdier, more tireless exponent of what we might call the Whitman tradition in the American literature of our century than Waldo Frank. His work presents an unusually orderly development from his first novel, *The Unwelcome Man* (1917), to his recently published book about Israel, *Bridgehead* (1957). The intricate relationships and steady growth of idea and form within his work suggest a process of growth very similar to that of *Leaves of Grass*. For forty years his statement has grown

in depth, breadth, and poetic intention, whether the immediate task has been fiction, history, travel, or criticism. But since Gorham Munson's enthusiastic study of Frank's early work appeared in 1923, there has been no thorough appraisal of his career. In spite of European assurances of his greatness, at home Frank has been a victim of a curious tendency he himself shrewdly noted in speaking of the way his friend Paul Rosenfeld was neglected by his countrymen: "America [has] lived down to its mean century-old record of neglect of the creative men it cannot place in ready pigeon-holes."<sup>2</sup> And Frank is harder than most American writers to relegate to a pigeonhole.

His writing cannot be classified simply as stream-of-consciousness, naturalism, poetic realism, proletarian or visionary literature; it possesses some characteristics of all. He has been interested at various times in liberalism, socialism, communism, and Henry Wallace's progressive movement; but he has never resided permanently or blindly anywhere along the political slide-rule. Although he was for a time (in the 1930s) president of the Marxist-dominated American Writers' Congress, he did not hesitate to question the motives and the judicial procedure of the Moscow trials—a revelation of his reservations about the official Communist Party line and the cause for a rebuff by Earl Browder.<sup>3</sup> Although he sincerely believed in Herbert Croly's ideals, he resigned his position as a contributing editor of *The New Republic* because of his distaste for "the trance of modern empiric liberalism and isolationism" in which that journal's editors appeared to be held through the troubled days preceding World War II.<sup>4</sup> Although he has been an avid student of Jewish thought and culture, he has not been willing to go along with the rabid Zionists, who have attacked his sympathetic but honest study of Israel, *Bridgehead*. In short, he has observed and worked in many movements, cultural and political; but he has customarily avoided anything approaching wholehearted acceptance,

2. "The Listener," *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts*, ed. Jerome Mellquist and Lucie Wiese (New York: Creative Age Press, 1948), p. 91.

3. Walter B. Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 251-2.

4. Waldo Frank, Letter to the Editor, *New Republic*, CII (June 10, 1940), 795-6. Lewis Mumford submitted his resignation as contributing editor at the same time.

pursuing instead a steady, almost militant individualism. Like Whitman or Emerson's "American scholar," he has been faithful to an inner vision of truth, not a follower of any dogma.

To acquire some appreciation of the nature and the extent of organicism in the work of Waldo Frank, it is necessary to look briefly at the outward development of an impressive career before we can consider adequately the more important inner development of the work. In his very candid autobiographical essay called "I Discover the New World," Frank recalls that his youthful connections with European culture seemed considerably closer than those with his native land.<sup>5</sup> The books and the music he knew as a boy were primarily European, and his family made several trips to Europe before he was of college age. His education in the New York City public schools was supplemented by a stay at a school in Switzerland. When he entered Yale, he found somewhat to his surprise that American college boys were considerably more interested in football and fraternities than in intellectual or artistic currents. While he was in New Haven, he wrote dramatic criticism for the New Haven *Journal-Courier*, played Bach, and devoted himself to the study of European literatures. In 1911, graduating with both B.A. and M.A. degrees and a Phi Beta Kappa key, Frank began what was to be a lifelong love affair with his native land—an affair that has been punctuated by enough lovers' quarrels to emphasize its passionate intensity.

Leaving New Haven, he wandered out to Wyoming to work on a ranch for a few months, and then came back to New York to write for both the *Evening Post* and the *Times*. What he saw of the city as a reporter was not pleasant—"a New York of murders, robberies, politics, and visiting celebrities who spent the interviewer's hour telling him pleasant things about America which were not so."<sup>6</sup> Reacting to his discontent with what he saw and seemed to sense, he decided that in Europe lay his "paradise," and in 1913, he left the United States. This move he refers to as "the same old gross mistake"—the illusion of young American artists and intel-

5. Waldo Frank, *In the American Jungle, 1925-1936* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937), pp. 3-15.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

lectuals that residence in Europe would solve all their problems.<sup>7</sup>

The year in France and Germany was pleasant enough, for he found congenial spirits there and an atmosphere that stimulated his creative powers; yet, he said later, there was something lacking. He felt uprooted; he could not feel himself really a part of the European soil. He was impressed by the great enthusiasm and respect among Europeans for such American writers as Whitman and Poe, neither of whom had as yet been really accepted at home as major literary figures. Furthermore, his contacts with American expatriates convinced him that the proper place for American writers and artists was the United States:

... it was in the company of these Americans that I began to feel most sharply my need of coming back. If what they said was true [*i.e.*, that America was an ugly and barbaric country], all the more urgent was the return of men like themselves who claimed to be conveyors of truth, creators of beauty—men who could endow America with what they accused America of lacking.<sup>8</sup>

If there had been nineteenth-century American art good enough to impress discriminating European readers and critics, America must evidently offer grander possibilities for its artists and thinkers than had seemed possible to him earlier.

In 1914, he was back in the United States. He saw that much of what the expatriates had said was true: everywhere he saw the ugly obsession with possessiveness, and there seemed to be little evidence of or even concern about an indigenous culture. There was no American theater worthy of the name, no outstanding magazines to further the work of native writers, almost no interest in liberal thought. Between his homecoming and the beginning of his work on *The Seven Arts* in 1916, Frank lived on New York's East Side and did free-lance writing.

The task of *The Seven Arts* was not the "art for art's sake" which seemed to motivate magazines like *The Little Review* or *The Double Dealer*. It was to attack the *status quo* in American art and thought and to champion the ideals of Whitman. Such a program constituted a direct challenge to numerous entrenched in-

7. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

terests in America, social as well as artistic; the magazine was a medium through which defiance to the pervasive Puritanism in American life could be preached. Frank and his talented associates were able to present during the magazine's brief life something of a closed rank to challenge "the sordid, mechanistic, venal, hypocritical life that underlay the tepid spiritual manifestations of the genteel tradition."<sup>9</sup> But the task of setting an adolescent nation's culture straight was to assume a double difficulty: at the same time *The Seven Arts* critics were attacking the vested interests in society and the academic approach to the arts, they were confronted with the rise of such writers as Eliot, Hemingway, Pound, Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson, Cummings, and Dos Passos, who, as it seemed to Frank and his colleagues, wanted to solve their aesthetic problems by stressing their disillusion. More recently Frank has said of what he and his friends were trying to do:

. . . at the time of the *Seven Arts*, it appeared to us manifest that it [the Whitman tradition in American literature] would become dominant at last, but we were wrong; the bases for such a command were not sufficiently sound and the fusion of the Mark Twain-James influences (only superficially alien to each other), symbolized in such men as Eliot & Hemingway, took over.<sup>10</sup>

Frank and the other members of the editorial staff wrote creative and critical pieces for the magazine, and they were able to secure contributions from such people as Robert Frost, Romain Rolland, Kahlil Gibran, Amy Lowell, Josephine Baker, Barry Benefield, John Dewey, Willard Huntington Wright, Sherwood Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, and H. L. Mencken. The editors expressed their admiration for the work of D. H. Lawrence and John David Beresford in England, and Frank pointedly suggested in an essay that the way must be cleared for such valid artists in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

The *Seven Arts* group saw art and literature as a part of larger social questions. Just as Whitman had seen what was wrong in American life after the Civil War at the same time that he was

9. Lewis Mumford, "Lyric Wisdom," *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts*, p. 43.

10. Letter from Waldo Frank, February 25, 1953.

11. "Vicarious Fiction," *The Seven Arts*, I (January, 1917), 302.

calling for an "American faith," so these men were exhorting the American writer to produce "work which is done through a joyous necessity of the writer himself."<sup>12</sup> A new kind of self-reliance was required, even though the mechanical bases of the twentieth-century world make a dynamic individualism difficult, because such a world seemed to require only a stereotyped, mechanical expression designed for mass consumption. Indeed, these men saw the pallid condition of the arts in America as stemming from the baneful and, as they said, allied influences of Puritanism and business. Of his feelings at that time, Frank later wrote:

We spent so much time making money because the poets had not yet come to teach us to make better things. We were so proud of our machines because the builders of more significant beauty had not yet come among us. We were such busybodies about the personal habits of our neighbors—keeping them from an innocent drink or even from a cigarette—because the teacher had not yet appeared to show us better ways of ennobling our souls. And finally, we marched about in white sheets, passing restrictive laws against immigration, grew intolerant of the chaos of creeds and races in our midst, because we were not yet strong enough, mature enough, to conceive of a unity of inclusion rather than of exclusion.<sup>13</sup>

The coming-together at this time of the young man of vision and a magazine with a mission produced in the man the main lines of a critical program and an aesthetic which he has consistently expanded and deepened with an almost religious fervor ever since. Frank's experience on *The Seven Arts* seems to have fixed forever his allegiance to the Whitman tradition in American art. In reviewing his career after 1917, I see no signs of his ever wavering in this basic allegiance, although like Whitman himself, he has explored many bypaths alongside his road to the articulation of an ideal.

The work of Frank and his friends was, as I have said, only one of many manifestations of the intense creative ferment which brought forth *Poetry*, *The Little Review*, *Dial*, *Prufrock and Other Poems*, the Armory show, Imagist anthologies and manifestoes. But the distinguishing feature of *The Seven Arts* group was their intense

12. [James Oppenheim, Editorial Statement] *The Seven Arts*, I (November, 1916), 52.

13. *In the American Jungle*, 1925-1936, p. 12.

preoccupation with the possibilities of an unashamedly American expression which would be a vital part of the whole of American experiences and which could be related to the truly native art of the past. Brooks had explored some possibilities in his *America's Coming-of-Age* (1915); he had pointed out a disastrous dichotomy running through all aspects of American life. The dualism he identified as "highbrow" and "lowbrow" traditions, but Brooks felt that there appeared to be some grounds for a sound American or "middle" tradition, whose ablest exponent was Walt Whitman. Whitman, he said, neither escaped into the vast, nebulous erewhon of Transcendentalism nor bogged down in the mire of "getting ahead." And when Frank, Oppenheim, and Brooks joined forces on *The Seven Arts*, the thought and intention of Whitman became, as Frank later called it, their "working-ideal."<sup>14</sup>

As Frank later analyzed (in his *The Re-Discovery of America*, 1929) the relative positions of the nineteenth-century American writers, glimpses of the "apocalyptic vision" had been shared by Whitman's great contemporaries—Emerson, Melville, Poe, and Thoreau. To that extent, Frank found himself in agreement with the "golden day" thesis of Lewis Mumford, the disciple of Brooks. But Emerson was the hero of Mumford's book, and Frank accepted Emerson only as a forerunner, a pale and wistful seeker for what Whitman expressed so much more satisfactorily and abundantly. Emerson was unable to get beyond his abstract speculations, Melville's rage and vision were too much for his technical resources, Poe was too much preoccupied with form, and Thoreau retreated from the chaos to Walden Pond. But Whitman, with all his failures, met all the requirements Frank set up for the "apocalyptic" artist. He becomes, in fact, the measure for the American artist from the beginning to the present. Whitman started with himself, branched out to include Paumanok, and eventually was able to fuse himself with the non-self—the American earth and the entire cosmos. His vision was "focused . . . on America much as the Prophets had theirs on Israel."<sup>15</sup> This strong assertion of what constituted a really "usable past" was evidence that Frank was looking for something

14. Letter from Waldo Frank, February 25, 1953.

15. *Ibid.*

much sturdier than what the genteel critics had found.

*The Unwelcome Man*, Frank's first novel, came out in 1917; but it was his first major work of non-fiction, *Our America* (1919), that convinced and still convinces the careful student of twentieth-century American literature that the Whitman tradition was far from finished. The free, proud yet honest, visionary treatment of a land and the forces that shaped it is still quite rare in our literary record. What Whitman had dimly perceived and foretold in *Democratic Vistas* is here realized dramatically and convincingly. Written specifically at the request of representatives of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, *Our America* was begun as an attempt to write for our French allies of the first world war a book which would explain a curious, remote, basically misunderstood country and explain it outside the clichés of official channels. The book which emerged from this assignment is an intuitively, poetically conceived evocation of an America whose nature had been cunningly and efficiently concealed by both conservative historian and slick artist. Frank combined an unorthodox historical viewpoint and a thematic interpretation into one profound synthesis—a synthesis toward which he had been quietly moving since his pre-war stay in France. But *Our America* has the ring of assurance and depth, the revelation of a country and a people, which we expect of a classic; so important a book does it seem almost forty years later that one frequently wonders why it has not long ago been reprinted, like some of the early work of Van Wyck Brooks and Williams's *In the American Grain*. The book's inner meaning established unmistakably the poematic intent of all of Frank's later work, fiction and non-fiction, and furnished an infinite number of motifs which received extensive treatment in his later work and in the work of writers whom he befriended like Hart Crane.

During the 1920s, Frank continued his critical work and the writing of novels. He was a contributing editor of *The New Republic*, *The New Masses*, and some journals abroad. His novels appeared steadily—*The Dark Mother* (1920), *Rahab* (1922), *City Block* (1922), *Holiday* (1923), *Chalk Face* (1924), *The Death and Birth of David Markand* (1935), *The Bridegroom Cometh* (1939), *Summer Never Ends* (1941), *Island in the Atlantic* (1946), *The*

*Invaders* (1948), and *Not Heaven* (1953). In addition, between the wars he traveled abroad and became especially interested in Latin America, Spain, and Russia. His works in history and cultural interpretation include *Virgin Spain* (1926), *America Hispana* (1931), and *Dawn in Russia* (1932), as well as comment on the American scene—*The Re-Discovery of America* (1929) and *Chart for Rough Waters* (1940).

Frank remained vitally interested in all the arts during these years, and was friendly with many people who had interests similar to his. A study of these friendships would be a kind of informal history of the arts in our time. He was close to Alfred Stieglitz, the photographer and art patron; Charles Chaplin, whose cinematic art Frank early recognized as great; and the poet Hart Crane. Frank was probably the only thing approximating a steady force in Crane's chaotic life; and under his influence and encouragement, Crane wrote the most successful portions of *The Bridge* (which, in spite of some overemphasized, even trivial imperfections, remains the finest long poem of our century). Indeed, as the published letters of Crane clearly show, Frank was called upon again and again for reassurance and instruction in matters which proved too deep or too confusing for Crane. In 1933, the year after Crane's death, Frank undertook to write an introduction for the *Collected Poems of Hart Crane*. He tirelessly attempted to encourage the establishment of an adequate American expression, especially among young writers, by editing the *American Caravan*, an anthology series of the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1934, he was one of the editors of a large volume of essays, *America & Alfred Stieglitz*, a tribute to the photographer-artist and another clear call for the establishment of a serious, organic American art. His more recent essays and reviews in *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and the *New York Times* probe ever more deeply his views of the novel, the American literary past, and the continuing need for a satisfying literary expression in opposition to the fashionable but impotent contemporary modes.

Frank has also been very active in a variety of liberal causes. Many of the essays contained in *In the American Jungle* (1937) and *Chart for Rough Waters* (1940) deal with social and political

topics, which are after all inseparable from the vision of the whole which he has steadily pursued. The essays of the earlier volume range from his estimate of Calvin Coolidge as the appropriate symbol of America's deranged Puritanism to the disgusting spectacle of a sports-worshipping American public at the shrine of Babe Ruth or Jack Dempsey. Frank watched earnestly from here and in Russia the experiment of communism; he found much to praise during the 1930s, but more recently he has expressed the view that communism does not permit a logical view of man in the cosmos. *In the American Jungle* contains several essays from the 1930s praising aspects of the Soviet Union and the program of the American Communist Party, but in the novel *The Invaders* (1948), Mark, the protagonist, condemns the whole viewpoint of communism:

"A Christian is logical," he said, ". . . he has God's word for it that man ranks first and that the animal world is his servant. But not a communist, not anyone who admits only materialist values. For nothing *natural* in man can give him a just measure to set himself above the rest of creation—except the crudest dogma, that might . . . might alone . . . makes right."<sup>16</sup>

In all his critical writings, Frank has made quite clear, I think, that there are two Americas. One is the America of the national dream, the boundlessness which drew men out of the old world's confining medieval synthesis and which still lures us in our better moments on beyond material conquests. The other America is that of actuality, which supposes that material accomplishment is the mighty goal and is synonymous with the dream. Sound American art, of which Whitman was the first full expression, connects the two Americas and shows how they may become one. The chaos must be confronted before it can be transcended. Anything less than this, to Frank, is of course a compromise, and compromises in literature are generally derivative if not completely imitative. That is essentially the basis for Frank's rejection of the work of Pound, Eliot, Henry James, Mark Twain, and their followers: they were not hardy enough to come to grips with the national chaos, to select from the chaos the forms and contents of their work, and

16. (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1948), p. 120.

thus to anchor the fragmentary America of actuality to the unified and boundless America of vision. In our own time, Frank has recognized the significant work of Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, and Sherwood Anderson, as belonging to the "apocalyptic" tradition of which Whitman is the beginner. And, though he has modestly omitted his own work, careful readers of Frank's own novels—especially *City Block*, *Rahab*, and *Not Heaven*—recognize that these too form important segments of the Whitman tradition in our time.

Much, of course, could be said about the novels; but since a separate essay is being devoted to that subject in this issue, it perhaps remains only for me to sum up Mr. Frank's achievement. He has advanced the Whitman tradition in our day because he accepts the prophetic role which Whitman fulfilled so strikingly and demanded of the artists who would follow him. Frank has insisted on the responsibility of the artist to make "our America which is the paradigm of the world" more conscious of her role in pointing the way to man's cosmic destiny. He has reminded the artist of the importance of finding new forms in stating the "Great Tradition" for modern man, and the American audience of its duty to attend to what its significant artists have to say. The "primitive" language forms he advocated for the new artists are forms toward which Whitman's poetry was only an exercise. He sees the need of new words, new forms, and new insights, as interrelated; American art desperately needs all three. Like Whitman, he is willing to criticize sharply what he sees in the contemporary scene which acts as an obstacle to good art. He has not yet seen the establishment of what he considers the indigenous tradition in American literature, but he has continued to seek that establishment and to prepare for it through his criticism and the example of his own creative work. Since 1916, Frank has been calling for a visionary basis of art which would tie together all the individual images into a unity which will foreshadow the synthesis of a mechanical world. His theory of art is one with his political and social viewpoints, and all are blended with a rare mystic zeal to make the earthly state of America a fitting symbol of and preparation for the cosmic unity which man perceives slowly but which the artist following Walt Whitman

knows intimately in flashing insights. The revelation of such insights in organic forms is thus the highest social good the artist can perform in America; this is the fundamental position of the theories of both Whitman and Frank. And the achievement of Waldo Frank is to have remained true to this lofty ideal.

## Free to Destroy—Free to Create<sup>1</sup>

WALDO FRANK

**M**AN MUST LIVE henceforth with the power of death over his self. This consciousness casts a fierce light within us. The light has many forms, poetic and scientific. By it man may also learn to live. We move into an era of unprecedented freedom. We are free to destroy, free to create: the two as indissoluble as individual and group that live by one another.

Every individual as he matures learns that he has immediate power over his own life and over the lives grouped with his. . . . Now a new time opens, in which man—not individual men—knows his power over man and the whole earth. The time of Man begins.

The devastation that an atomic war would mean is but a melodramatic phase of the deeper, more immediate drama in which man now wakes as tragic victim and perhaps as hero. To dwell with the melodrama is our greatest danger, because our greatest lie. The catastrophe is already with us, because the potential of the catastrophe is in us.

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, p. 441.

## Waldo Frank as Novelist

WILLIAM BITTNER

WALDO FRANK first became a national literary figure in 1919, when his *Our America* struck the imagination of a public just becoming aware of the difference between the idealism that the war had been fought for and the actuality around them. Prior to that time Frank had published a novel, *The Unwelcome Man*, and a little book of appreciation of the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier. As associate editor of *The Seven Arts* he had established, along with Van Wyck Brooks, Randolph Bourne, and others, the school of criticism that came to be known as "Literary Radicals." Pioneering and important as these activities were, however, they had but a limited effect. *The Unwelcome Man* was held merely to be "promising," and *The Seven Arts* lasted only a year. *Our America*, however, established Frank in this country and abroad as a cultural critic of acute perception and one of the most promising of young writers.

At that time his real interest was to be a novelist, yet that desire was not brought much closer by the publication of his already-finished *The Dark Mother* in the following year. Carl Van Vechten, in *The Blind Bow-Boy*, attacked it tellingly, yet seemed oddly influenced by it. Frank continued to work on fiction, but in developing a new technique he kept revising what he wrote, and he was further delayed in publication by the threat of Charles Sumner's New York Society for the Prevention of Vice and other self-appointed censors then ferreting after serious fiction.

From 1922 to 1925, Frank finally broke through with a rapid succession of four novels. Two of these, *City Block* and *Holiday*, are unusual by anybody's standard, and would have been "discovered" long before this, save that copies are very scarce. *Chalk Face*, when it comes to notice, will probably be better understood than when it first appeared, but since it treats too personal a problem, and treats it in a Poe-like manner, may not be generally

approved. *Rahab*, the one that established Frank as a novelist, is the only one of the four "lyric" novels that will probably never again catch the critical fancy.

*Rahab*, although the second to be written, appeared first. It traces the decline of a virtuous girl, her rise as a woman of easy virtue, and the awakening of a spiritual wholeness in her through her refusal, like the Biblical Rahab, to betray one who came to her house. Like most books about prostitutes, its subject-matter is banal, and the writing is not sufficiently craftful to rescue it. The organization of the story is a transition from the short episodes of *City Block* and the lyric sweep of *Holiday*, and it simply does not succeed in an age like ours as it did for those whose taste was sufficiently Victorian that the shock effects of novels about bad women could carry the story.

*City Block*, on the other hand, is effective and original in every way. Made up of a cycle of episodes, each of which can stand alone as a short story, in which a variety of people, all residents of a block of flats in New York city, try to find some sort of understanding of themselves and their relations with each other, it is more tightly organized than Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, and more profound. It does not comment merely on the oddities and violence beneath the surface of a commonplace community, a microcosm of society as a whole, but suggests that there is a real unity among all human beings that they need only become aware of to be whole.

*Rahab* grew out of a proposed episode for this book, thus is ill proportioned. But *Holiday* succeeds in being a continuous, tightly knit novel as lyrically effective and as profound philosophically as *City Block*. Although it is the account of events leading up to a lynching in a Southern town, its symbolism makes of this tale of increasing tension and release a struggle between the polarities of being, the attraction and repulsion of physical and spiritual entities. It is an attack on the duality of body and soul.

*Chalk Face* is another study of duality, reminiscent of Poe's "William Wilson" save that the split in the main character is not between his good and evil sides, but is of himself and the potentiality for evil in himself. The prose style shifts from section to

section, and although this should make the story clearer by indicating the degree of hallucination, it simply makes the confused reader more confused. Successive readings, however, reveal that the book is clear but psychologically very deep, and that in those depths is a peculiar distortion.

The lyrical novels of Waldo Frank are, for all their shortcomings, a very remarkable achievement. They are profoundly original, both in style and in point of view. In literary technique they are closer to poetry than any fiction written before them, and they express a philosophy that is deeply religious and psychologically sound. Certainly they established Frank as a writer of novels that, although not entirely understood, were highly respected, and even before *Holiday* appeared, Gorham Munson had produced his discerning *Waldo Frank: A Study*, and Hart Crane was hailing Frank as "the richest in content of any 'fiction' that has appeared in the American 20th century."

Having achieved success as a novelist, Frank, as he did after the acclaim for *Our America*, went on to something else. Up to this point he seemed to be a vital part of the literary scene of the romantic twenties. Faulkner and Hemingway had not yet been established as the dramatizers of decay and disillusion, while Fitzgerald was considered by the earnest esthetes of the time as too slick. From a position of vantage in the main stream, Frank seemed to be turning up a tributary when he left the lionizing of Paris in 1924 to go to Spain.

*Virgin Spain*, published in 1926, won Frank an invitation to exactly where he wanted to go—Latin America. His lectures were published as *Primer Mensaje á la América Hispana*; his book, *America Hispana*, won him adoration from the Spanish-speaking Americans; and *Waldo Frank in America Hispana* was edited by M. J. Benardete from the articles and laudatory addresses inspired among Latin Americans by his visit. He swayed the entire attitude of the countries south of us, and was made a symbol, in the people's imagination, of all that was good about the land of Washington and Lincoln. Naturally, at that point he turned to something else.

This time, the new venture was begun even before the old was fully accomplished, and it came almost in spite of Frank's

efforts to return to the field of the novel. *The Re-Discovery of America* was begun as a return to the theme of *Our America*, but it turned inevitably into a discussion of a religion for our time. By this juncture it should have been evident that Frank's work was all of a piece; his material was always new, but his theme was always one: his techniques varied, but their aim was always man in society as an expression of God.

By the mid-thirties, Frank was known as the cultural philosopher of *Our America* and the *Re-Discovery*, as the interpreter of the Americas to each other, as one of the Literary Radical critics, and, among a few people, as the author of some very unusual novels. In addition to his writing, his actions had endeared him to a very significant part of the intellectual world. As chairman of a committee to carry food to the striking miners of Harlan, Kentucky, he had been beaten and driven out, and thus the radicals, in particular the Communists, made him a symbol of revolutionary man on the barricades.

The divergent audience applauded, but did not know what to make of his next two novels. *The Death and Birth of David Markand*, dedicated to "The American worker who will understand" (but who didn't), traced the evolution of an Emerson-Whitman person, one who by mystical revelation achieves his quest for a self. *The Bridegroom Cometh*, written when Frank was still *persona grata* with the Communists, carries a similar evolution to the stage where the revolutionary movement is found wanting for its lack of religious awareness. Frank was not simply moving on to new stages at this point, but was rejecting impedimenta hindering his try for the summit. Among his rejections was the mass of his audience.

Up to this point, the careers of Frank and of John Dos Passos parallel each other. They had moved from short, lyrical novels to panoramic fiction, using social forces almost in the same way that they used characters. Each was adopted by the revolutionary movement. But Dos Passos, leaving mystical revelation out of it all, was able to produce documentaries that fit the taste of the time, while Frank focused on the development of the person. He never had struck the rather primitive literary taste of radicals, so when he

rebelled against the Stalinists he lost the only appeal he had ever had for them, their loyalty.

*The Bridegroom Cometh* was completed in 1938. A short novel, *Summer Never Ends*, as confusing to the reading public as *Chalk Face*, was his only fiction until the end of the second world war, when Frank wrote a long-proposed novel on the New York of his father. *Island in the Atlantic* was a natural progression from the previous long novels. In it the person, in tune with the society around him, is brought equally into harmony with the cosmos and God. In its perception and presentation of the flawed harmony of America between the Civil War and the first world war, it is remarkably akin to the best seller of the same time, *Raintree County*. Yet its commercial success, although respectable, was modest, for the postwar religious revival had not yet taken the shape it was to take, and criticism was still dominated by the sociologists of the thirties, who had rejected Frank long before, and the art-for-art's-sake New Critics, who had never accepted him.

Panoramic fiction, however, was already past its day, and Frank too did not return to it. His subsequent two novels, *The Invaders* and *Not Heaven*, are a return to the lyric form of his earlier successes, modified, this time, by his awareness of the complexities of man in society, and refined by a maturely developed system for remaining whole in a sick world. Sadly enough, these two books appeared at the nadir of his popularity, in the era, between the war and the mid-fifties, when the older critical judgment of the ex-Marxists and their opposite numbers, the New Critics, had definitely gone to seed, yet the shape of postwar literature and criticism had not yet emerged.

*The Invaders* is an attempt to juxtapose society and the person through the device of an atom bomb attack on New York City that motivates his ex-wife and children to invade the home—already provided with a new wife and child—of a retired architect. The microcosm of the house reflects the failings, in crisis, of the nation. The idea is ingenious, but weaknesses, primarily of language and details, make the story sordid rather than tragic. The philosophical concept that nations can save themselves in the same way as can persons, and indeed must, comes across, but it comes across

as idea, rather than as art.

*Not Heaven*, however, is as successful on this higher plane as was *City Block* in its time. Like the earlier book, it is a set of short stories bound together by a theme, but this time the only unity is in the theme; each story is in characters and setting independent of each other. Already Waldo Frank is at work on the novel that is to be the *Holiday* to this new kind of *City Block*, marking a third summit in his achievement as novelist.

Frank's fiction is most remarkable for the profundity of its philosophical content and its esthetic originality. His intentions were such that he had to create a new kind of novel to carry them out, and develop the form of that novel each time his intentions grew. Frank's especial philosophical contribution, the concept of the person, is one that demands a new theory of the novel and of characterization. It claims that man achieves wholeness by becoming aware of, and acting in the awareness of, his rôle as digit of the cosmos. When one is aware of one's place in creation, he has achieved the highest individuality. Given that concept, there is but one subject for fiction: a character's quest to acquire personhood.

Traditionally, since the Greeks, it has been assumed that an actor in fiction or drama had a hard, immutable core, called his "character"; the plot of the play or story was the acting out of the inevitable implied in that core. But, in the light of modern psychology, this is nonsense. Nevertheless, our art forms are set up to perpetuate the primitive psychology of the ancients. Frank is the first artist consciously to create character in the light of modern psychology. It is this, his greatest creative achievement, that has hindered appreciation of Frank's work the most. Critics and readers alike looked past the drama he did create, seeking a drama he did not create, because in the light of modern science it did not exist.

Misjudged in the fundamental excellence of his work, Frank erred badly in the details. Since he lacks humor, his work lacked perspective. This is a common flaw with the highest sort of artists, as E. M. Forster indicated in his chapter on prophecy in *Aspects of the Novel*. Having given our time a scheme of characterization that harmonized with our knowledge, he lacked the power of

modified mimicry to write good dialogue. His major characters all talk alike; his minor characters speak like burlesques of themselves. In his attempt to be poetic, he turns phrases with such obtuseness that they are clichés before they are aphorisms. His vocabulary is ostentatious and insensitive.

But these are minor flaws for one not writing in the old tradition of the novel. Waldo Frank has, in offering a fresh theme and a new technique of the novel in our time, been more truly creative than a bushel of more skilled novelists. He has not perfected his form but he has created it. The young writers of the present, from J. D. Salinger to Jack Kerouac, are striving to find what Frank has already found; it would be a shame if they could not take up his concept and his esthetic and make of it what can be made: the novel of tomorrow.

## Mood-Piece

FRED COGSWELL

Plucked by the sliding fingers of now,

Thin strings in time's harp-bow,

We vibrate and wear and go.

Though now and then our sounds may join

In a sweet, short unison,

All too soon the tune is gone . . .

As though a player blind and bent

Fumbled with the instrument—

In senility content

If from the strings his fingers wrung

Faint notes of the full song sung

When the harp and he were young.

# Joseph, or the Search for the Brother<sup>1</sup>

PADRAIC COLUM

JOKE-FA the King calls me, and by that name let me be known for the present; it is the Tanata attempt to pronounce the name "Joseph"—it was used by him when the King began to take counsel with me.

Ten years after I had come so forlornly to the Islands which are known as Bouganvillia to the outside world and to the aboriginal Islanders by a series of names brought by their navigators and given them by poets and seers and another series of names which are mysterious and disclosed to few, and five years after I had become Councillor to the King, I write this.

I walked up and down in a coco-nut grove and awaited Laa. I wondered at the litter the palms produce—nuts, and leaves, and shreds that might be brown cordage: surely these palms were never meant to grow in groves. I could see Laa's house. It had been built to reproduce the style and proportions of a small French villa, but where it stood with a beach blackened by the lava flow and with strange-looking trees beside it, it looked unrelated to any way of living. Then Prince Laa came out of the house, no attendant with him.

He was the brother of the dead woman who had been my wife: apart from that I had a deep affection for Laa. I had been very forlorn until we became friends. To ride with him, to read books in English to him, kept me from too great loneliness. And from Laa I learned the poetry of a people who loved the color and flow that were always before their eyes. Laa had a good nature: I found in him heroism and integrity.

<sup>1</sup> This story which Ulick O'Reilly finds in a manuscript does not appear in the published version of *The Flying Swans*. It was to have pointed up the idea of brotherhood that permeates the book.—W.T.L.

"O my younger brother!"

The single word I used in greeting him had much significance: it signifies the protection that a king gives to a follower as well as what an elder brother gives to a younger brother. And as he came to me, Laa said, "O my elder brother," and that word implied not only a youngster's dependence on an elder but an unprotected man's dependence on his lord.

"Do not come close to me, Io-ke-fa," he said. "Stand off from me."

"Why, Laa?"

"I have sickness."

"Has it not passed?"

"No." The two syllabled negative was a wail. Laa crouched on the litter that was under the palms. I went and stood above him.

"What is your sickness, Laa?"

"Paka sickness."

Leprosy! The hands I held over him stiffened. I heard the sound of the surf. I saw a fisherman on the beach with a sack and a spear. I saw Laa crouching there, and I told myself that Laa had told me he was a leper. I shook all over.

"Tell me, Laa, who told you this?"

"I cannot talk to you unless you go away from me."

"How has this been made known to you?"

"The King's physician has examined me and has told me."

"Laa, my younger brother, you may have dreamt this. Do you not say it because you have heard it said of someone else?"

"The King's physician has examined me and has told me. But unless you go a distance from me I cannot speak to you."

So I went from Laa who then sat with his head sunken on his knees; already he had passed into the state the Islanders so immediately pass into—a state of despair.

"This cannot be, Laa."

"The King's physician has said it."

"To you?"

"To me. Now he tells the King. Oh, Io-ke-fa, my elder brother, save me!"

"Would that I could, my younger brother. Oh, would that I

could!"

"Not from the Sickness—from that you cannot save me—but from the King."

"The King is your parent; he would be kind to you."

"He would send me where those who have the Sickness are—he would send me there. . . ." Laa pointed to where, across the island, below a line of precipices, there was the leper settlement. "All his white councillors would make the King send me there. You only, my elder brother, would save me from being put there."

"You trust me, Laa. I must do everything to save you. But from what? From being put across there? But where would you live, Laa?"

"Here—in that house. It would be made *tapu* by the King. Then no one would come near me. I could walk in this grove and look upon the sea. My attendant would be one who also has the Sickness, and you would come and talk to me with these trees between us. You would come, my elder brother?"

"I would come, Laa."

"Then I would not be forsaken."

"I will speak to the King. I will oppose the others in council if that be necessary. The King must let you live here, my younger brother."

"I would not be forsaken."

"I can come here and we would talk together."

Now the fantasy of Laa's announcement was wearing off; the terror was there, but it had been looked at and some defense had been put up against it. Laa lifted up his face: I saw a desperate and pathetic search in his eyes. "Yes, Laa," I said, "you will not be forsaken. Your elder brother will be with you. And I will be spared much unhappiness for I will be able to come here and talk with you. But it may be wrong what the King's physician says—you may not have the Sickness."

In a man of European race there would have been a desperate striving after this hope. But with Laa there was no striving: a man who has fallen down a precipice knows he has fallen down; the place he fell from can never be attained by him again. Laa had heard and had accepted one doom; his elder brother would avert

another. This was in the face that he turned to me.

"<sup>Holpos</sup> You will stay in this house and swim and canoe in the sea," I told him. "Fear not, Laa; it shall be as you wish. My younger brother, you will not be abandoned by me."

He bent his head as if he were laying it on my knees. Then he rose up. The loose robe he had on folded itself round him, and he stood with all the dignity of his kingly line. He turned and went towards the house. "Do not follow me, Io-ke-fa," he said. He went within. The door closed. A woman who was preparing a meal under a tree offered me food on a tray. I ate standing before the door of the house. The door was not opened and no sound came from within. "The Chief reposes himself," the woman said: to her, Laa was still one of the Heaven-descended ones whose rest was protected by *tapu*.

I mounted my horse and rode upon the uplands where the King's ranch was. All day I was with the King's stewards or riding with tall men whose mothers were of the Islands and whose fathers had ridden on the Pampas. The calves had grown and were now sturdy little beasts—immature bulls that faced men with heads bent or ungrown cows that started away easily: the grown beasts had the wildness that came from their great range. All day I looked on lowered or tossing horns and sweating flanks. This burning sun was not kind to cattle, although they suffered nothing from thirst. Towards evening there was rain.

I took my night's shelter in a hut that I knew of. I knew the man who lived in it; indeed I had advised the King about his case, and it was because of my advice that he was here in banishment and not in prison in the town. I will write about this man: some things that he told me stay in my mind, not the events that led to his banishment to this place, but something that may be purely a fantasy of his.

He was born at sea on a Spanish ship—so he told me. On the same ship, at the same time, another child was born. And in the confusion and trouble (how easy it is for me to see it all!) he was given to the wrong mother. The other infant did not live. This man was brought up by the people he had been given to; they were Spaniard and servants to some important people; they were dark

and he turned out to be fair-haired and blue-eyed.

Grown up, he heard the story of the births on board the ship; he learned from those whom he now regarded as his foster-parents the name of the other family to whom a child was born. They were English and of good family. He went to find them. He came to the man and woman whom he regarded as his father and mother; he saw young men whom he believed to be his brothers. The family likeness, he claims, was patent. But they would not acknowledge him. The young men whom he believed to be his brothers turned him away.

How bitter is the grief of being disowned I learned from the way he spoke of this. He spoke as if he really believed that these men were his brothers. If his story is not made up to impose upon people, if they whom he thought to be his brothers turned him away, how pitiful his case! I was glad that my influence with the King had saved him from prison, causing the man to be banished only. This was the case: the sailors from the whaling ships had been making riot in the port, demanding women, and many of them had been put into prison, the prison in which this man was a warder. Several were in a single cell: there was a fight within, and when this man opened the door to see what was happening, some tried to rush out. He struck one with a club and felled him, then closed the door. On opening it next day the man was found dead. The seamen took possession of the port and demanded that the alleged killer be given up to them. Instead he was tried and sentenced to a long term in gaol. It was then I influenced the King to have him banished to this place.

Something about him tells me that he would be a faithful man to have with Laa. But as he has not the Sickness he cannot be made Laa's attendant.

I rode with the rangers until I came where the line of precipices marked the abrupt end of the greater area of the island. What was below might have been joined accidentally to this island of streams, uplands and waterfalls, joined from another sort of land-formation. Down there everything was different: the sea, I noticed, was grey. At the extreme point a few dwellings were to be seen. There was where the lepers were sent; having gone there they might never,

they could never, go any place else. As I looked down there from my horse's back I saw that the ranger on the horse beside me had tears on his face. One who was close to him was down there. Separation!

My pen runs on!

Separation—scattering! I have known them since I entered manhood. The convict-ship with the poor fellows who had joined in that rash enterprise of mine signified a separation that I was never to overcome. With us were men separated by their infamies from all we thought of and strove for. And then a prisoners' land where I was refused access to the sacraments of my faith. My escape was a flight from solitariness. Did I find fellowship on the islands I came to? Barriers were always here. In my marriage? So separate our ways of life had been that we found enigmas in each other. Now she is no longer with me and I have only one companion, the stricken Laa.

I had thought that all this scattering and separation were due to a system that in my own country had destroyed the allegiances that hold people together. These allegiances can be destroyed, I know; it is a terrible thing to destroy them. But it is not only in my own country that these allegiances are being destroyed, and it is not only through their destruction that scattering and separation come on a people. A plague has been brought here that puts wives away from husbands, brothers from their brothers. And there are other reasons for scattering and separation—greed and restlessness amongst others: the men who rode with me are separated from their kindred; the sailors who rioted in the town are separated from their families. And the King! He is being separated from his peoples' ways and their and his own tradition; alien things will be brought in, and this will lead to disorders that will cause more scattering and separation. As Councillor I will oppose all that will lessen the dignity of the King, the nativeness of the people.

I had dreamt that my own country could attain a position from which statesmanship could work; a statesmanship, I thought, could act against the separation and scattering I have known, perhaps by giving a pride to the union of one with all and all with the past. I know that I never will be in a position to forward such measures.

I know, too, there are other ways to union. An historian might help towards it. Or a writer of great scope. A creator in music. A painter or a sculptor. Statesmanship, scholarship, the arts—someone might rise in any of these domains who might be moved to do, who might have the power of doing, some work that would help us to join, one with another.

And I? I will not have Laa banished. But have I the strength and faithfulness to stay with him as he wants me to stay? I do not know—in spite of all I have been through I do not know myself. I know that if I abandon Laa I will have abandoned something that should not be abandoned. A brother! More than a brother—brotherhood. The great measures I have noted I cannot carry out. But this I must . . .

## Calen O Costure Me

PADRAIC COLUM

In *Henry V*, a song is mentioned by its first line—"Calen o costure me." The words are a mispronunciation of the first line of a song in Irish which, according to Professor Gerald Murphy, would mean "I am a girl from beside the Suir." It was a popular song in sixteenth century Ireland. The present is not an attempt to reconstruct it—it is an attempt to dramatize what a girl "from beside the Suir" might be conscious of in Elizabethan London.—P.C.

I am a young girl  
From beside the Suir,  
Where like two shining harpstrings  
Streams are clear and pure  
Adown a slope of verdure  
Where gorse has golden flower—

**My thought must not be on them:**  
**I look towards London Tower.**

**Would that there were beside me**  
**Our wolfhound brave and great,**  
**Who with a bound would shatter**  
**The timber of yon gate,**  
**And in the forecourt standing**  
**Would hold the guard at bay,**  
**Until two captive Irishmen**  
**Broke covert and away.**

**For in the Tower of London**  
**Is held the Earl's son,**  
**His foster-brother with him,**  
**My gallant brother Owen;**  
**And if a clan in Munster**  
**But raise a battle cry,**  
**Their doom would be the edge of axe,**  
**Or dark captivity.**

**I pray to Heaven above us**  
**That nought may break the peace,**  
**For scattering of people**  
**In Munster's provinces,**  
**But that in their possessions**  
**At rise or set of sun**  
**They'll look towards Cliu's Harpstrings,**  
**Or turn to Slievenamon.**

## Padraic Colum, Poet

WILLIAM TURNER LEVY

IT IS NOT ONLY the actor who may be type-cast, both to his detriment and to that of his public, but any artist, and, indeed, among his family and friends—any man. While the type-casting of an actor may result in a stunting of his potential, most writers do express themselves, and it is the public that limits them by ignoring all atypical production. Sometimes we are brought up short and exclaim, "What! Did Tennyson write *that*?"

Padraic Colum has been acknowledged as a master of the Irish faerie: the quaint and leprechaunish peasants have been celebrated by him in prose and verse. This is simply not true. His tales for children include fairy stories, but Colum is the vigorous, hard-headed spokesman of the true peasant, the recorder of the historic fate of Ireland; and even in the books for the young he has never talked down but has sought to hand down both the historic and mythic past. As poet and playwright and essayist—and now as novelist—he speaks the true spirit of his nation and has the versatility of a scholar-poet. Most important, he has written poems that would astonish those who know only the set anthology pieces—"The Plougher," "A Drover," and "An Old Woman of the Roads." Devin-Adair is the publisher of *The Collected Poems of Padraic Colum*: it is a proud book, and it ranks its begetter among the authentic poets of Ireland.

Born in Longford in 1881, Colum persistently reminds us that it is Maria Edgeworth's county as well as Goldsmith's. If she pioneered the Irish regional novel, Colum introduced the dramatic lyric into Irish verse; and both Goldsmith and Colum shared the spirit of protest inculcated by economic and political ills. This spirit found Colum's tongue for him, and the plays it produced taught him the dramatic sense that characterizes his poems.

In 1903 with *Broken Soil* (later rewritten as *The Fiddler's House*), he created the peasant play. It was a felicitous moment,

with Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory and *Æ* all striving in the National Theatre Movement, which centered around the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. "All the 'set pieces,' scenery, and even the forms on which the audience were to sit," writes Seumas O'Sullivan, "had to be made by ourselves, and very often the actors at the far end had to raise their voices to drown the noise of hammer and saw; but it was all glorious enjoyment, and we were, I think, convinced that our enthusiasm was, indeed, 'making history.'"

Colum's next play, *The Land*, was the Abbey's first success. Together with *Thomas Muskerry*, these two plays have been called second only to Synge's. With no predecessor of importance, young Colum wrote of the call of the land, the struggle between town and country to hold people (a people also attracted to America), peasant conditions, and the revolt of the young against the patriarchal system which embodied the authority of the older generation. He was the first to do the peasant on his own level and in the speech of the field and market-place. That speech can rise to the intensity of the closing lines of *The Land*, when Murtagh Cosgar is urged to speak:

"Men of Ballykillduff," you might say, "stay on the land, and you'll be saved body and soul; you'll be saved in the man and in the nation. The nation, men of Ballykillduff, do you ever think of it at all? Do you ever think of the Irish nation that is waiting all this time to be born?"

Before long, Colum was writing poems, and it is not unnatural that this should have been so. *Æ* said, "There is probably no poetry published for generations which sank so deeply into the affections of Irish readers . . ." Confronted with the statement, Colum replied that it was really not surprising, for all that he was doing was giving back to the people what he had taken from them. He considers himself fortunate that as a child in his grandmother's house, which was a folk household, he had been able to hear the story tellers and the ballad singers. His luck held, for later, as a young man, he was not influenced as he might have been by Kipling and Swinburne, but by Yeats and the Gaelic movement.

The impressionable child heard his grandmother's tales (his poem "The Ballad of Downal Baun" preserves one that can be found nowhere else in Ireland's literature) and listened to the

ballads learned and sung by his uncle who was a travelling fowl buyer. That uncle had sung of Paris! and it was a magic name and place to the boy: "O'er the field of Meringo, Ballona did hover, / And Paris rejoiced the next day!" Padraic's father was master of the workhouse and here it was that, living in a fine house by a good architect, and with the pleasure of gardens that planted a permanent curiosity about trees and flowers—what Goldsmith called the "vegetable kingdom"—in the lad, all sorts of displaced persons, the remnants of the famine population, were to be met and talked with. Representing all the old skills and arts, these persons—lonely, lost, wandering—darkened Padraic's thoughts, and he was sensitive to the ache in the exile's heart. It was a strange environment for a six or seven year old, and to this day the man he grew into remembers the pauper children—one in particular, with a white crow on his shoulder! This must be when he met, as well, the bitterness of old men:

Four feeble bones are left to me,  
And the basket of my breast  
And I am mean and ugly now  
As the scald flung from the nest. . . .

The strength is carded from my bones,  
The swiftness drained from me,  
And all the living thoughts I had  
Are like far ships at sea!

Nor was it better because one had had an adventurous past:

Old, bare and sore, we look on the hound  
Turning upon the stiff frozen ground,  
Nosing the mould, with the night around:  
So it is to be an Old Soldier.

This experience was the genesis not only of "Garadh" and "Old Soldier," but of "The Beggar's Child" and "A Rann of Exile" and many subtle poems of the loneliness and uprootedness of men and animals. All this because "they saw potatoes rot and melt black in the earth." A painful moment of history.

Later, his father was stationmaster at Sandycove, near Dublin,

and it was there that he so often explored the miniature wonders of the toy shop he later recorded in a poem—not forgetting its elderly, lame mistress. Toys, making a world of their own, and the toy maker, an artist of sorts, carving "things with no troubles in them"—that was escape indeed. But more important was the school—described in his novel, *The Flying Swans*—and the schoolmaster who revealed to him the rich possibilities of poetry, which speaks man's mind and heart in meter. Much Byron and Shelley he memorized; today he can still recite "Ode to a Nightingale" and Gray's "Elegy" entire, and he can name that schoolmaster, a Cork man, Dennis Condon.

Dublin itself was nurse to his eager growth, for the very young man who was not to go to an intermediate school or university read and read in the National Library, which, to his joy, was open until ten at night. Here he first found Ibsen. Although Colum worked in a railroad office and then a newspaper office, it must be recalled that he had early success, came to the attention of Yeats, and soon had access to the drawing rooms and salons, first of Dublin, then of London, where his plays were also produced.

He completed his education then in the theatre (experimenting and revising through rehearsals) and at the feet of great men and brilliant, warm women: in neither the theatre nor the lives of artists, scholars and revolutionaries (often all three in one individual) did he learn that literature and politics could be separated. The Colorado to which his father had briefly gone to seek a silver wall seven feet high and topped with gold was less exciting a place by far than the brilliantly peopled drawing rooms of the turn of the century, a world that is denied the young artist today. The company of creative persons, and the poverty of those who surrounded him in his childhood, combine as the chief influences on Padraic Colum. Of the latter he wrote (referring to Hans Christian Andersen): "Poverty, by shutting away multiplicity, can endow familiar things with special intimacy."

It is this special intimacy that accounts for the success and the unique value of his early poem on the honey-seller. The subject is his, original, "local," but it is the intimacy of detail enclosed in a perfect rhythm that makes the lines cry to be read aloud, each

syllable, not only each word, roundly desirous to be formed in the mouth. The logical division of stanzas moves us with economy—to where the poet would have us be. The insinuating yet halting movement of the opening conforms us to his pace, the poet's, and the honey-seller's:

Down a street that once I lived in  
 You used to pass, a honey-seller,  
 And the town in which that street was  
 Was the shabbiest of all places;  
 You were different from the others  
 Who went by to barter meanly:  
 Different from the man with colored  
 Windmills for the children's pennies;  
 Different from the drab purveyor  
 With her paper screens to fill up  
 Chill and empty fireplaces.

The insistent and, in English, rare accent on the first foot combines with the reiterated "different" to prepare us for a fresh perception. The honey-seller differed from both the man who profited by the notoriously big eyes of children and the woman with her practical necessities to sell. He had assurance:

You went by, a man upstanding,  
 On your head a wide dish, holding  
 Dark and golden lumps of honey;  
 You went slowly, like an old horse  
 That's not driven any longer,  
 But that likes to take an amble.

No one ever bought your honey,  
 No one ever paid a penny  
 For a single comb of sweetness;  
 Every house was grim unto you  
 With foregone desire of eating  
 Bread whose taste had sweet of honey.

With like assurance, the poet finds the right word again and again. Strong, fresh, awakening words, clean and right on our

tongues: "upstanding, wide, golden, lumps, amble, grim, foregone . . ."; and the strong accent works for him to perfection: "No one, no one, every . . ." The honey-seller retains identity:

Yet you went, a man contented  
's though you had a King to call on  
Who would take you to his parlour,  
And buy all your stock of honey.  
On you went, and in a sounding  
Voice, just like the bell of evening,  
Told us of the goods you carried,  
Told us of the dark and golden  
Treasure dripping on your wide dish.  
You went by, and no one named you!

So it was his sounding voice we heard—almost felt—from the beginning! The street cry: the available, the permanent possibility, necessary though denied. The honey-seller's treasure, the prophet's, the poet's.

Writing of Burns, Colum used words others might think equally applicable to himself: "Whoever touches Burns's book touches a man and touches a community and a territory . . . let us praise his judgment, his loyalty, his independence—the judgment that made him know the value of the life he experienced, the loyalty that kept him close to his own people, the independence that kept him clear of pseudo-classicism."

Colum's judgment led him to write of Nell the Rambler (who would visit his mother) as the Mountain Thrush, to celebrate a folk thought in "A Cradle Song," and in "The Captive Archer" to articulate the ambition of all men for the chance of a tomorrow. In "Ave Atque Vale" his brother's death summoned a great translation from Catullus, that brother to whom he dedicated the volume *Old Pastures* with the words: "F. H. C. You who made no claims and gave no denials, soldier and sailor who might have been companion of men who carried the eagles."

The poet's loyalty is rewarded with "A Connachtman," a poem of a man contemplating (and that is the correct word for it) his wake. The girl in "Young Girl: Annam" writes letters in her lone-

liness, but there is no one to send them to: the poem is Chinese in its delicacy of mood: it ends:

In the garden the fire-flies  
 Quench and kindle their soft glow:  
 I am one separated  
 But from whom I do not know.

The woman in "No Child" is driven to distraction by the nest-stirring of wild pigeons in the night. "Across the Door" speaks for itself:

The fiddles were playing and playing,  
 The couples were out on the floor;  
 From converse and dancing he drew me,  
 And across the door.

Ah! strange were the dim, wide meadows,  
 And strange was the cloud-strewn sky,  
 And strange in the meadows the corncrakes,  
 And they making cry!

The hawthorn bloom was by us,  
 Around us the breath of the south—  
 White hawthorn, strange in the night-time—  
 His kiss on my mouth!

His independence can be illustrated in a single poem of a passion not often associated with his name, "Branding the Foals":

Why do I look for fire to brand these foals?  
 What do I need, when all within is fire?  
 And lo, she comes, carrying the lighted coals  
 And branding-tool—she who is my desire!  
 What need have I for what is in her hands,  
 If I lay hand upon a hide it brands,  
 And grass, and trees, and shadows, all are fire!

In *Ulysses* Joyce wrote, "He has that strange thing called genius." Colum's verse has been widely translated, and into languages like Albanian and Ukrainian as well as the more familiar; it is not

surprising, for his subjects are universal for all their particularity—with gravity and simplicity he communicates the dignity of a people without material gifts, the changing beauty of natural things and the timeless surroundings of farm and cottage; the dependence of the landless, the skill of the craftsman, the peasant mixture of realism and fantasy—he knows—and man's fight for freedom, and man's haunting interest in animals, especially the shy, neglected, or exotic ones. The man who was one of the founders of the *Irish Review* and its sole editor in 1912 and 1913, is a member of the Academy of Irish Letters, whose coveted Gregory Medal he possesses. A member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in this country, he has also been President of the Poetry Society of America, and in 1952 won the fellowship of the Academy of American Poets. In 1947 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Irish Historical Society, and four years later had conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Literature by the National University of Ireland.

But he has never rested; he has recently completed a biography of his friend Arthur Griffith, that great shaper of the new nation. He is at work on an important book on Joyce (on which his late wife, the brilliant Mary Colum, was collaborating), and his novel *The Flying Swans* has now appeared after more than fifteen years of work. It is a novel written on three levels, revealing the emergence of the artistic intelligence; the scattered and broken quality of the culture; and the brotherhood made possible through the creative artist. Its scope and its high seriousness will gradually win it a place among the major novels of our time.

If his most original contribution was the form of the dramatic lyric, his continuous sense of history and an alert curiosity of eye as well as mind, account for the chief qualities of his work. Out of the language and dramatic situations of the theatre he conceived dramatic lyrics like "A Drover," "A Poor Scholar of the 'Forties" and the splendid "Dermott Donn MacMorna." Browning was an influence, but Douglas Hyde's "The Love Songs of Connacht" gave the pattern and the language—and not to Colum alone. This was a collection of folk poetry and folk stories published in originals and in fine translations: Hyde saved them from loss by collecting them

from old men and women shortly after his return from Canada, where his interest had been aroused in the language and lore of Indian tribes. We think of the annihilation of the Indian, but we do not realize that the disaster of the double famine of '46 and '47 very nearly meant the end of the Irish. Social life was rent and the tale, the song, the memory of the past, all being social, passed out of use. As Colum has pointed out, "The older generation who were the custodians of the national tradition were the first to go down to the famine graves." George Petrie, who collected what was left of Irish music, speaks of "the sudden silence of the fields" where, before, music and song were heard in roadway and house. The break in the tradition was the unique problem that faced the writers of the Irish Revival.

Colum's dramatic sense can be measured against Tennyson's, say, if one compares the over-romantic, dramatically conceived "Ulysses" with "The Burial of Saint Brendan." The canny saint has decided none will thwart his will to be buried at Cluan, so his words arise out of a necessary situation. They are perfect—as is the poem—felt, not conceived, and, unlike Browning, arrogantly unself-conscious. Colum understands his saints. In "A Saint" he paints the gala day ("Music and holiday, / And benediction bells"), but then he probes the cost to the saint in denial and strife and work in order that his name might sanctify those who did not welcome him. And he understands their Master, too, as he proves in his verses for the Stations of the Cross.

In view of his nation and the state of the nation, his fascinated study of history is not surprising. It everywhere enriches the scope of his work, but finds a kind of quintessential statement in "Scanderbeg." The girl in this poem is like most persons who are without knowledge of the past that influences them:

She sat on the wall and dangled her silk-stockinged legs,  
Saying, "I'll not have them stung for any old man who is  
dead,"

So I went where nettles were rank and came on a stone  
that read,  
"Matthew de Rienzi . . ."

But the boy's imagination summoned the nations and the battles and

Two hundred years' battling in Europe at the name of  
Scanderbeg

Spun through his mind as a curlew cried overhead!

Like his friend Douglas Hyde, he participated in the preservation of history. In 1923 he went to Hawaii at the invitation of the Hawaii Legislature to make a study of native myth and folklore; these tales and legends he collected and wrote down; in addition, he did essays and poems of his own, attempting to capture for us the essence of the islands:

The sign is given; mighty the sign: Tapu!  
All murmurs now, speech, voice,  
Subdue: inviolable let evening be . . .  
It is evening; it is hallowed for being that:  
Let tumult die within us all: Tapu!

Whether you discuss the poetry of the pre-Mohammedan Arabs or the variants of English ballads found in the Southern Appalachians, Colum is ready to join in as an eager student and appreciator. You cannot find him a stranger to the art of ancient Crete, the subjects of Hafiz, Newton's prism or Spinoza's glass. All alike excite his imagination and animate his conversation. The first of us to read Toynbee whole ("Be sure to read the footnotes, the footnotes are the best part!"), he wrote to a soldier in 1945: "You've been in one of the great historic movements—the crossing of the Rhine—something that will remain in their thought for generations of men, and you were there to participate in it in a fresh and youthful spirit."

His curiosity is boundless and its origin is in a reverence for all created things: the same quality which leads him to ask the name of strange babies he stops to admire. His wide sympathy may end in a poetic question: "Can I have grief for everything?" If not grief, interest anyway: in sardonic men; women knitting at the door, always knitting; "a herd-boy in the rain." Horses he admires, and most the almost Pegasian horses of Arabia; Wilfred Blunt once told him, and he remembered it, that "The swiftness of his horse was an insurance for the Arab—he could escape death on his

horse's back. But the rifle has destroyed the effectiveness of that insurance, and the Arab chiefs are no longer interested in keeping up the strain of swiftness." In a pet shop window he communes with a pair of tiny monkeys with faces no larger than a penny and voices "as low as / The flow of my blood." Birds as evanescent as the hummingbird attract him, and so do "Vultures": again, as with the honey-seller, the theme transcends the matter:

Foul-feathered and scald-necked,  
They sit in evil state;  
Raw marks upon their breasts  
As on men's wearing chains.

Impure, though they may plunge  
Into the morning's springs,  
And spirit-dulled, though they  
Command the heaven's heights.

Angels of foulness, ye,  
So fierce against the dead!  
Sloth on your muffled wings,  
And speed within your eyes!

Sometimes man and beast are less far apart than usual, especially if the man be lone. He writes of the tin-whistle player:

... He has hare's eyes, a long face rimmed  
Around with badger-grey;  
Aimless, like cries of mountain birds  
The tunes he has to play—

The tunes that are for stretches bare,  
And men whose lives are lone—  
And I had seen that face of his  
Sculptured on cross of stone,  
That long face, in a place of graves  
With nettles overgrown.

Need we mention the flower poems and those on trees? Or the essay called "A Meditation on Cakes," which ranges in references from Burton's seventeen volumes to Cordelia and the Queen of

Sheba?

Colum's aesthetic delight, then historic interest, in sails, leads him from thinking of Ponce de Leon's barque to Henry Ford's book, *Today and Tomorrow*. It results—that train of thought—in his most strongly worded essay, "Henry Ford Versus Toilers of the Sea." The passionate nature of the man is in these words, too briefly quoted, an indignant reply to Ford's minimizing of man's artistic creativities:

Civilizations are nothing else than the effort made by human societies to reclaim men from the wildness of nature, to focus their minds upon certain ideas that are beyond the providing of food, clothing, and shelter—metaphysical ideas—and by attaching them to these ideas to enhance whatever they possess of an inner life. None of them have given an opportunity to everyone who willed it to live as befits a human being. But the very conception of what befits a human being is due to civilization, is due to what has been achieved through books, buildings, and works of art.

Here I watch men making their nets and their baskets, their boats and their barrows; I watch women making their household's stockings, and I have the feeling that the men and women engaged in these tasks are enriching some part of their being. These works, done in the open air, in sight of the village that they and their fathers have lived in and will go on living in, knit generations together and help to form fellowships; they are works of piety in the old sense of the word, for their makers put their personalities into what is meant to be helpful, and the works themselves produce in us a reverence for what has been done by men's hands.

Which poem is his finest? "The Bird of Jesus." But it is a collection of poems, not one, that he offers us. In their honesty, richness, and variety, they produce in us a reverence for what has been done by the poet:

A song is more lasting than the voice of the birds!  
A word is more lasting than the riches of the world!

## The Insane

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

**W**HAT ARE THEY teaching you now, son? said the old Doc, brushing the crumbs from his vest.

I go on Medicine Monday, said the boy. We finished Pediatrics and Psychiatry today.

Psychiatry, eh? That's one you won't regret, said his father. Or do you like it, maybe?

Not particularly. What can we learn in a few weeks? The cases we get are so advanced, just poor dumb clucks, there's nothing to do for them anyway. I can see that there must be a lot to it.

What are you two talking about? said his mother.

Insanity, Ma.

Oh.

Any new theories as to causes? said the older man. I mean, not the degenerative cases, with a somatic background, but the schizophrenics especially. Have they learned anything new about that in recent years?

Oh Dad, there are all sorts of theories. It starts with birth in most cases, they tell us. Even before birth sometimes. That's what we're taught. Unwanted children, conflicts of one sort or another. You know.

I'm curious. What do they tell you about Freud?

Sex as the basis for everything? The boy's mother looked up at him a moment and then down again.

It's largely a reflection of his own personality, most likely. I mean it's all right to look to sex as a cause, but that's just the surface aspect of the thing. Not the thing itself. Don't you think?

That's what I'm asking you.

But everybody has a different theory. One thing I can understand though even from my little experience and that is why insanity is increasing so rapidly here today.

Really? said his mother.

I mean from my Pediatric work. He paused. Of the twenty-five children I saw in the clinic this week only two can be said to be really free from psycho-neurotic symptoms. Two!—out of twenty-five. And maybe a more careful history would have found something even in those two.

Do you mean that those children all showed signs of beginning insanity? said his mother.

Potentially, yes.

Not a very reassuring comment on modern life, is it?

Go ahead, said his father.

Take a funny-faced little nine-year-old guy with big glasses I saw in the clinic this afternoon. His mother brought him in for stealing money.

How old a child, did you say?

Nine years. The history was he'd take money from her purse. Or if she sent him to the store to buy something, he'd come back without it and use the money for something else he wanted.

Do you have to treat those cases too? asked his mother.

Anything that comes in. We have to get the history, do a physical, a complete physical—you know what that means, Dad—make a diagnosis and prescribe treatment.

What did you find?

The story was, this boy had been a Caesarean birth. His father was a drunk who died two years ago when the boy was just seven. The symptoms date from that time. A typical drunk. The usual bustup. They took him to the hospital and he died. The boy has one brother, an accident. After that the woman was sterilized. I'll tell you about him later.

Well, when the woman came home on the ninth day after her first Caesarean she found the old man dead drunk, as usual. He started to take her over—that's the story.

What's that?

Oh you know, Mother. Naturally she put up a fight and as a result he knocked her downstairs.

What! Nine days after her confinement?

Yes, nine days after her section. She had to return to the hospital for a checkup. And naturally when she came out again she

hated her husband and the baby too because it was his child.

Terrible!

And the little chap had to grow up in that atmosphere. They were always battling. The old man beat her up regularly and the child had to witness it for his entire existence up to two years ago.

As I say, she had a second child—three years old now, which, though she hated it, came between the older boy and his mother, forcing them apart still further. That one has tuberculosis at the present time which doesn't make things any easier.

Imagine such people!

They're all around you, Mother, if you only knew it. Oh, I forgot to tell you the older kid was the dead spit of his dad who had always showered all kinds of attention on him. His favorite. All the love the kid ever knew came from his old man.

So when the father died the only person the boy could look to for continued affection was his mother—who hated him.

Oh no!

As a result the child doesn't eat, has lost weight, doesn't sleep, constipation and all the rest of it. And in school, whereas his marks had always been good—because he's fairly bright—after his father died they went steadily down, down and down to complete failure.

Poor baby.

And then he began to steal—from his mother—because he couldn't get the love he demanded of her. He began to steal from her to compensate for what he could not get otherwise, and which his father had given him formerly.

Interesting. Isn't it?

So young!

The child substitutes his own solution for the reality which he needs and cannot obtain. Unreality and reality become confused in him. Finally he loses track. He doesn't know one from the other and we call him insane.

What will become of him in this case? asked the mother.

In this case, said her son, the outcome is supposed to be quite favorable. We'll explain the mechanism to the woman—who by the way isn't in such good condition herself—and if she follows up what she's told to do the boy is likely to be cured.

Strange, isn't it? said the old Doc.

But what gets me, said his son. Of course we're checked up on all these cases. They're all gone over by a member of the staff. And when we give a history like that, they say, O those are just the psychiatric findings. That gripes me. Why it's the child's life.

Good boy, said his father. You're all right. Stick to it.

### Sonnet to Adventure

CHARLES EDWARD EATON

For travel's sake I knocked upon a bush,  
The rhododendron like an oval gate;  
Since time had taught me to expect the hush  
That hides behind a door I did not wait.  
Only wanting to assuage the pity  
Of having locked myself in summer's lair,  
I chose entrance to the pinkest city  
As proof of exit if I could not bear  
The human balance of my tranquil days—  
There is a coming of the overlord  
When summer reaches oriental phase  
In portals shut upon the senses' horde  
And Persian pink conceals a caravan  
Of loves drawn out into the heart of man.

# Index to *The Literary Review*

## Volume 1 (1957-1958)

Volume I of *The Literary Review* consists of four Numbers: 1. Autumn (October) 1957; 2. Winter (January) 1957-58; 3. Spring (April) 1958; and 4. Summer (July) 1958. The Volume is paged continuously 1-512.

The Index is by author, but translators are also included. Items by anonymous or unknown authors are noted by Title. Significant material within articles—quotations of poetry and prose—are cross-referenced by author and translator.

The following symbols are used: a—art feature; d—drama; e—essay, sketch, pensée; l—letters; p—poetry; and s—short story.

ALLWOOD, MARTIN S.: The Earth and Mr. Jonson, Co-trans. from Hans Botvid, p, 199.

ANCIENT CHINESE FOLK SONGS (seven): trans. by Willard R. Trask and George Margulies, p, 189-190.

AGNON, S. J.: A Passover Courting, s, 293.

ANGOFF, CHARLES: Mortimer, s, 151; Editorial Notes, inside covers.

ARC, JOAN OF: from Self Portrait, trans. by Willard R. Trask, e, 184.

ASHMAN, A.: Michal, the Daughter of Saul, d, 337.

ASPLUND, KARL: Untitled, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 197.

AYER, ETHAN: The Unicorn, s, 91.

BASLER, ROY P.: Proteus as Apollo: The Poetry of Merrill Moore, e, 233.

BIALIK, CHAIM NAHMAN: I Did Not Find the Light; On My Returning, p, 324.

BIANCO, FRANCESCO: Eleven Poems

(Ancient Metres, Feather, One Certain Spot, A Cry, Copa, Lakes, What Best Pleases Me, The Things, That Leaf, On a Look, Halcyon), trans. by Francesco Bianco and Willard R. Trask, 38-45.

BIANCO, PAMELA: Francesca Bianco, a, 47.

BITTNER, WILLIAM: Waldo Frank as Novelist, e, 478.

BJORNSEN, GURO: The Cow and the Fiddle, s, 117.

BOIARDO, MATTEO: Sonnet, trans. by Willard R. Trask, 188.

BOOTH, PHILIP: Accident Room, p, 221.

BOTVID, HANS: The Earth and Mr. Johnson, trans. by Martin S. Allwood and Lennert Edberg, p, 199.

BURKE, KENNETH: Towards a Total Conformity: A Metaphysical Fantasy, e, 203.

BURLA, YEHUDA: Evening, s, 275.

BYNNER, WITTER: Four Poems (Horsemanship, African Mask,

The Bell, Toys), 84-85.

CADDY, ALICE: Oliver St. John Gogarty, a, 132.

CANE, MELVILLE: Enchanted Snow, p, 103.

CHRONICLE OF THE WARRING KINGDOMS: Yen Cho Speaks with the King of Ch'i, trans. by Willard R. Trask and George Margulies, s, 190.

CIARDI, JOHN: Ulysses, p, 72.

CLARKE, DESMOND: A Boy with a Gun, s, 168.

CLOSSER, MYLA JO: The Fourth Hand, s, 159.

COGSWELL, FRED: Mood-Piece, p, 484.

COLUM, PADRAIC: Joseph, or The Search for the Brother, s, 485; Calen O Costure Me, p, 491; The Honey-Seller, p, 497; Across the Door, p, 499; Branding the Foals, p, 499; Scanderbeg, p, 501; and Vultures, p, 503.

CUMMINGS, E. E.: Poem, p, 74.

CURTIS, E. ROELKER: Comeback, s, 175.

DANIELS, GUY: Parus (The Sail), trans. from Lermontov, p, 71.

DECKER, CLARENCE R.: Editorial Notes, inside covers.

DEJONG, DAVID CORNELL: Harvest Time, p, 87.

DENIS, KING: Girl to Her Mother, Girl to Her Lover, trans. by Willard R. Trask, p, 186-187.

EATON, CHARLES EDWARD: Sonnet to Adventure, p, 508.

EBERHART, RICHARD: Memory of Meeting Yeats, AE, Gogarty, James Stephens, e, 51; Apple Buds, p, 56.

EDBERG, LENNERT: The Earth and Mr. Jonson, co-trans. from Hans Botvid, p, 199.

ENGSTROM, ALBERT: Untitled, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 196.

FANDEL, JOHN: Comprehension, p, 90.

FICHMAN, YAakov: Hermon, p, 329.

FRANK, WALDO: From Gargantua to the Yahoo, e, 441; Seeds for the Next Spring, e, 456; Free to Destroy—Free to Create, e, 477.

GOGARTY, OLIVER ST. JOHN: Where, His Epitaph, The Ill Wind Inn, Good Luck, The Isles of Greece, Why, A Wish, And No Farther, Coming From the Movies, A Whodunit Who Didn't, The Subway—Rush Hour, The Wondrous Ties of Bartenders, p, 4, 132, 142, 146-150; Mr. Satterthwaite's Conversation, s, 135; Rhythm, e, 143.

GREENBERG, URI ZVI: After All the Seeking; Last Prayer, p, 328.

GULLBERG, HJALMAR: Untitled, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 197.

GURI, CHAIM: Here Our Bodies Are Cast, p, 332.

HABERLY, LOYD: Lyric Aristocracy—The Younger Pliny, e, 200.

HALKIN, SIMON: Within This Land, Within; What Have You Tasted, Stranger . . . , p, 330-331.

HALL, DONALD: The Unborn Child, p, 86.

HAZAZ, HAYIM: The Seraph, s, 316.

HEIMANN, SHOSHANA: Jerusalem, a, 260; Boy and Girl, a, 274.

HILLYER, ROBERT: Sermons in Stones, At the Garden Club, The Masquerade, A Filler, These Golden Tendrils, Miss Helen Lang, A

Ballade of Revelation, The Descendant, The Person from Porlock, The Garden, The Interpreter, The Pavilion by the Sea, Pastoral V, Remote, Visitants in a Country House at Night, p, 82-83, 388, 406, 415, 425-430, 435-436, 439; Oliver St. John Gogarty, e, 133; Forty Years of Writing, e, 389; Robert Hillyer as Correspondent, l, 407.

HOLMES, JOHN: Lesson in the Monkey House, p, 220.

HUGHES, LANGSTON: Six Poems by Gabriela Mistral, trans., 75-81.

KAMZON, YAakov DAVID: A Dove Among Doves; Very Fair My Lot, p, 333.

KARNI, YEHUDA: Gladden Me, O Jerusalem, p, 329.

KEITH, JOSEPH JOEL: Poor Town, p, 222.

KLAUSNER, JOSEPH: An Old-New Literature in an Old-New Land, e, 261.

KREYMBORG, ALFRED: Exit Vachel Lindsay—Enter Ernest Hemingway, e, 208.

LAGERKVIST, PER: You Are Not Yourself, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 197.

LAMDAN, YITZHAK: Masada, p, 327.

LEACH, HENRY GODDARD: Rosa Rorans (Saint Birgitta), trans. from Bishop Nils, p, 181; Sweden's Contemporary Poets, e, 196; trans. from Albert Engstrom, Hjalmar Gullberg, Karl Asplund, Per Lagerkvist, Erik Lindegren, Anders Osterlings, p, 196-199.

LERMONTOV: Parus (The Sail), trans. by Guy Daniels, p, 71.

LEVIN, MENASHE: Isaac Blesses Jacob and Esau, s, 309.

LEVY, WILLIAM TURNER: Padraic Colum, Poet, e, 493.

LINDEGREN, ERIK: The Dead, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 198.

LIPTON, LAWRENCE: The Uses of Poetry, e, 248.

MARGULIES, GEORGE: Ancient Chinese Folk Songs (seven), p; Yen Cho Speaks with the King of Ch'i, s, co-trans., 189-192.

MARTINSON, HARRY: After, trans. by Richard B. Vowles, p, 198; Sun Smoke, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 198.

MARZ, ROY: The Habit of Mother Birds, The Birthday, p, 88-89.

MISTRAL, GABRIELA: Six Poems (Larks, Fear, Song of the Fisher-folk, Song, Midnight, Prayer), trans. by Langston Hughes, 75-81.

MOORE, MERRILL: Eight Poems (The Contents of Waste Baskets, Something Slammed the Door To, All Telephones In This Area Cost Ten Cents . . . , Her Largesse, His Voice Is Like A Singing Tree, And If I Would I Know Not Where to Hide Me, Plentiful? I?, I—Me—Je—Ego—Wo, Etc., Etc.), 237-247.

MULKERNS, VAL: Kin, s, 104.

NICHOLL, LOUISE TOWNSEND: Incense, p, 116.

NILS, BISHOP: Rosa Rorans (Saint Birgitta), trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p, 181.

NORMAN, CHARLES: To the Memory of Francesco Bianco, e, 37; Willard R. Trask: A Universal Garland, e, 182.

OSTERLING, ANDERS: *Refrain*, trans. by Henry Goddard Leach, p. 199.

PATERNO, LODOVICO: *Sonnet*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, 188.

PEARSON, NORMAN HOLMES: *Williams, New Jersey*, e, 29.

PINKERFELD, ANDA: *Almost Like a Legend*, p, 336.

PINS, JACOB: *Trees and Shadows, Girl with Doll, Mountain Village*, a, 289, 292, 315.

POPE, ARTHUR UPHAM: *Persia and the Holy Grail*, e, 57.

PORTUGUESE FOLK SONGS (four): trans. by Willard R. Trask, 187.

SCOTT, WINFIELD TOWNLEY: *Robert Hillyer — A Poet's First Forty Years*, e, 431.

SHALOM, SH.: *Lamp; Old Age*, p, 334.

SHAW, CHARLES: *Where Sorrow Hangs*, p, 88.

SHOFMAN, GERSHON: *Deborah*, s, 307.

SIEGEL, ELI: *The Little Cube in Space, Candor Will Be Mine, A Hundred Plants on an Estate, Through Winds, The Question*, p, 223-225, 232; *Critical Afternoons of Once*, e, 226.

SILESIUS, ANGELUS: *Four Poems*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, 189.

SMILANSKY, MOSHE: *Latifa*, s, 290.

STARBIRD, KAYE: *Return Now to the Valley*, p, 219.

STAVSKY, MOSHE: *The Year of Abundance*, s, 299.

STERN, YOSI: *Bazaar in Meah Shearim*, a, 308; *Torah Scribe*, a, 323.

TANAI, SHLOMO: *Tomorrow's Straits*, p, 326.

TCHERNICHOFSKY, SAUL: *The Three Donkeys*, p, 325.

THIRLWALL, JOHN C.: *William Carlos Williams as Correspondent (notes and letters)*, 13.

TRASK, WILLARD R.: trans.: *Five Poems from Francesco Bianco*, 43-45; from *Joan of Arc: Self Portrait*, e, 184; *King Denis (two poems)*, *Portuguese Folk Songs* (four), *Sonnet by Matteo Boiardo*, *Sonnet by Lodovico Paterna*, *Poems by Angelus Silesius* (four), *Ancient Chinese Folk Songs* (seven, with George Margulies), 186-190; *Yen Cho Speaks with the King of Ch'i (from Chronicle of the Warring Kingdoms)*, s, 190-192; *Pastoral, October, Exile, Pastoral in Dialogue, Inscription*, p, 193-195.

VOWLES, RICHARD B.: *After*, trans. from Harry Martinson, p, 198.

WILLIAMS, EDGAR I.: *William Carlos Williams*, a, 7.

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM CARLOS: *From My Notes About My Mother*, e, 5; letters, 13; *Two Sentimental Little Poems, The Little Sparrows, Flowers by the Sea, The Uses of Poetry, Poem, The Sparrow*, p, 28, 30-35; *The Insane*, s, 505.

WILLINGHAM, JOHN R.: *The Achievement of Waldo Frank*, e, 465.

YEN CHO SPEAKS WITH THE KING OF CH'I, from *Chronicle of the Warring Kingdoms*: trans. by Willard R. Trask and George Margulies, s, 190.

YITZHAK, AVRAHAM BEN: *Autumn in the Avenue*, p, 335; *Why Do You Turn?*, p, 335.

## Editorial Notes

(continued from inside front cover)  
have to be translated, for multi-linguism, alas, is still as much a dream as flight to the moon.

We want to assure unpublished or little-published writers everywhere who hesitate sending us their best work. They should not be intimidated by the appearance of "names" in our pages. These "names" appear solely because they have something to say; other "names" have had their manuscripts returned because there was nothing in them save a tired pomposity or worse. It is always a pleasure for us to print anything by a veteran writer, because it is always a pleasure to share fine craftsmanship and fresh perception into the mystery of human personality. But it is an even greater pleasure for us to give space to a beginning writer and thus help him to find himself. All manuscripts are read with the utmost care. Works by "unknowns" are read with the same special attention but with a little more trembling expectation. For there is nothing in the life of an editor that gives more satisfaction than coming upon a pearl of great price, written by a man or woman who is still unknown to the world.

The Israeli Number of the *Review* (Spring) was generously, even enthusiastically received. The many readers who expressed appreciation, not only for it, but also for the entire series of special Numbers devoted to the contemporary writers and writings of foreign countries, will be pleased to know that word has

been received from Mulk Raj Anand—one of India's leading writers—that he will soon complete his recommendations of the contemporary writing of his country to be included in the India Number. The Italian Number—in the capable hands of Claudio Gorlier, Ferdinando Virdia, and Elémire Zolla—is similarly well under way.

Forthcoming numbers of *The Literary Review* will include:

Short stories by Charles Angoff, Paul Bartlett, Lorna Beers, Virginia Chase, August Derleth, Kaatje Hurlbut, Anita Clay Johnson, and Rena Niles;

Poetry by Ethan Ayer, Elizabeth Bartlett, Joan Stafford Bishop, Charles Black, W. Arthur Boggs, Philip Booth, Byron Colt, Guy Daniels, Samuel S. Duryee, Willis Eberman, Charles Guenther, Miriam Hershenson, Elizabeth Johnson, Hannah Kahn, Louise Townsend Nicholl, Bink Noll, Charles Norman, Aaron Schmuller, Charles Shaw, G. W. Sherman, Knute Skinner, Kaye Starbird, A. Wilbur Stevens, Lucia Trent, and Isabel Williams Verry; and

Articles: Phyllis Ackerman, "Who Is Kundrie—What Is She?"; Marie Borroff, "Dramatic Structure in the Poetry of Marianne Moore"; Norman Friedman, "The Poetic Mask of E. E. Cummings"; John Holmes, "The Achievement of John Ciardi"; Robert Payne, "The Poetry of Mao Tse-Tung"; and Bogdan Raditsa, "Conversations with Miguel de Unamuno."

Several full-length plays are also under consideration.

The

Literary

Review

AN INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY PUBLISHED BY

**Fairleigh Dickinson University**

TEANECK, NEW JERSEY, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

